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TWENTY-ONE

# SERMONS,

Sam.l Miller

ON A VARIETY OF

## INTERESTING SUBJECTS,

SENTIMENTAL AND PRACTICAL.

*By SAMUEL HOPKINS, D. D.*

PASTOR OF THE FIRST CONGREGATIONAL CHURCH IN NEWPORT (RHODE-ISLAND.)

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# SERMONS,

ON A VARIETY OF

INTERESTING SUBJECTS.

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# Sermon I.

WRITTEN IN THE YEAR 1801.

The Reaſon of the Hope of a Chriſtian, which he ought always to give to him who aſketh it of him.

1 Peter, iii. 14, 15. *And be not afraid of their terror, neither be ye troubled; but ſanctify the Lord God in your hearts: and be ready always to give an anſwer to every man that aſketh you a reaſon of the hope that is in you, with meekneſs and fear.*

THE apoſtle Peter had a ſpecial commiſſion to preach the goſpel to the Jews, which did not exclude a regard to the uncircumciſed Gentiles. He therefore writes this epiſtle to the Jews who were diſperſed from the land of Iſrael, into various places in the Leſſer Aſia, and had embraced Chriſtianity; with whom the Gentiles are included, who had become Chriſtians, and had joined with the believing Jews. In conſequence of their becoming Chriſtians, they were hated, and ſuffered perſecution by the unbelieving Jews and idolatrous Gentiles; who were diſpoſed to inflict on them all the evils which were in their power; eſpecially the former, who exerciſed the ſame ill will towards them which Paul had and acted out before his converſion, and which they manifeſted towards the apoſtles and all Chriſtians; of which we have the hiſtory in the Acts of the Apoſtles.

The Apoſtle, in this epiſtle to them, mentions many things to ſupport and comfort them in their afflicted, ſuffering ſtate, and encourage and animate them to perſevere in the profeſſion and practice of Chriſtianity, to whatever reproaches, worldly loſſes and perſecutions they might expoſe themſelves hereby; and gives them

many directions for their conduct in all circumſtances, and towards all perſons; eſpecially in the preſent ſtate of things. Of the latter we find an inſtance in the words now before us. The Apoſtle here alludes to the words of Iſaiah in the eighth chapter of his prophecy. When the inhabitants of Judah were threatened with an invaſion by the neighbouring nations, he tells them not to be afraid of them, but to ſanctify the Lord of Hoſts, and make him their fear and their dread. So the apoſtle tells Chriſtians, when threatened with the greateſt evils that the enemies to Chriſtianity could inflict, not to be afraid of their terror, neither be troubled; but ſanctify the Lord God in your hearts. To ſanctify the Lord in their hearts was to love him ſupremely, and truſt in him alone, deſiring that he might be exalted and glorified above all creatures forever. The ſame word in the original is tranſlated *hallowed*, which is here rendered *ſanctify*. "Hallowed be thy name:" that is, may thy ſacred name and glorious character be made known, diſplayed and glorified to the higheſt degree, by all things that take place.

"And be ready always to give an anſwer to every man that aſketh you the reaſon of the hope that is in you." Chriſtians are directed to be *always* able, ready and willing to give the reaſon of their hope, to *every one* who aſketh it of them. This muſt be underſtood with ſome limitation. By *every one* who aſketh, is meant every one who aſketh in a proper, decent manner, and with an apparent, profeſſed deſire to know what reaſons Chriſtians can give for their hope. If any aſked them to do this, with an apparent deſign to ridicule and mock them, and to get ſome advantage, and matter of accuſation againſt them, which would expoſe them to ſuffering; they were not obliged to anſwer ſuch, as it would be contrary to the command of Chriſt: "Give not that which is holy to dogs, neither caſt ye your pearls before ſwine, leſt they trample them under their feet, and turn again and rent you."

"With

"With meekneſs and fear." Chriſtians are not to be haughty and inſolent in giving the reaſon of their hope, nor enter into oſtentatious and angry diſputes with unbelievers. They muſt not deſpiſe and treat them with contempt for their unreaſonable diſbelief; but pity them, and treat them with condeſcenſion, tenderneſs and benevolence, not ſhewing or having any angry reſentment for any injurious treatment they may have received from them; but ſuffering and bearing all injuries with a meek and quiet ſpirit and behaviour. All this is implied in meekneſs. Fear is here put for Chriſtian humility, in oppoſition to high-mindedneſs, and ſelf-confidence, boaſting of their privileges and character, by which they are favoured and diſtinguiſhed from thoſe who are in a ſtate of darkneſs and unbelief. It implies a ſenſe of their own exceeding unworthineſs, and utter inſufficiency in themſelves to defend and maintain the honour of the Chriſtian cauſe, without conſtant ſupport and aſſiſtance from divine grace; and continual liableneſs to fail of their duty, and diſhonour Chriſt, by not ſpeaking and behaving as becomes their Chriſtian calling and profeſſion. This fear is eſſential to the Chriſtian character, and becomes Chriſtians at all times. The apoſtle Paul exhorts Chriſtians "not to be high minded, but fear; to work out their own ſalvation with fear and trembling;" and tells the Chriſtians at Corinth, that he was among them in fear and much trembling.

The ſubject propoſed to be conſidered, in a further improvement of the words before us, is, the hope of Chriſtians, and the reaſon they have to give, and ought always to be ready to give, for this their hope, when properly required of them.

I. It is to be conſidered what is included in the hope of Chriſtians.

This hope indeed implies and comprehends more than words can expreſs, or the moſt enlarged mind on earth can conceive. The greateſt Chriſtians do in this ſtate comprehend and know but a ſmall part of what is contained

tained in this hope. And they depend on the enlightening influences of the Spirit of Chriſt, for the increaſing knowledge of this which they may and ought to obtain in this life. Therefore the apoſtle Paul prays for the Chriſtians at Epheſus, " that God would give unto them the ſpirit of wiſdom and revelation in the knowledge of him ; the eyes of their underſtanding being enlightened, that they might know what was *the hope* of his calling, and what the riches of the glory of his inheritance in the ſaints." Chriſtians may be aſſiſted in their meditations on this pleaſing and important ſubject, by attending to the following brief and ſcanty repreſentation of their hope, taken from the holy ſcriptures.

Jeſus Chriſt is the Chriſtian's hope. What is contained in his perſon and character ; in what he has done and ſuffered ; in the manifeſtations he has made of the divine perfections ; in his revealed deſigns and promiſes to his church, and to every believer, is all the Chriſtian can hope for, or can deſire, and far, infinitely far, exceeds his higheſt expectations, and the utmoſt ſtretch of his conception and imagination. Jeſus Chriſt has an infinite fulneſs for ſinners. He has all they want, and they cannot conceive or wiſh for any greater or other good. And he gives himſelf, and all he has, his infinite fulneſs, to every believer.

Chriſtians hope by Chriſt to obtain the free pardon of all their ſins, however many and great they are, and to be delivered from the curſe of the law of God, even eternal deſtruction and miſery, and from all evil. As the children of God, they hope for his kind protection to defend them from all real evil while in this world ; that what is in itſelf evil ſhall be made to them a real good, ſo that all things ſhall conſpire to promote their greateſt good. They hope, in the beſt way and manner, and the moſt proper time, to be delivered from all ſin and moral depravity, and made perfectly holy, by Chriſt their Saviour ; and that their ſalvation ſhall be for the glory of God and the Redeemer forever ; otherwiſe it would be no ſalvation to them. They truſt in the

the wiſdom and goodneſs of Chriſt to order the time and manner of their death ſo as ſhall be moſt for his glory and their good. They hope that when they drop their bodies into the grave they ſhall immediately enter into a world of light and complete happineſs, being wholly transformed into the moral likeneſs of Chriſt; and in the enjoyment of him, and of his favour and love, and beholding his glory; and in the happy ſociety of the redeemed, ſhall enjoy uninterrupted, increaſing felicity without end.

The Chriſtian's hope includes in it an aſſured and pleaſing proſpect that Chriſt will deſtroy the works and kingdom of the devil on earth, and ſet up his own kingdom, and give his people the poſſeſſion of the world, for at leaſt a thouſand years; which happy time for the meek, the ſaints, to poſſeſs the earth, and delight in the abundance of peace and happineſs, ſhall commence and continue in a time and manner moſt agreeable to Infinite Wiſdom and Goodneſs. And the Chriſtian expects the ſet time will come, and is haſtening on, when Chriſt will come to judgment, raiſe the dead, and aſſemble all the children of Adam before him, when he will ſentence the impenitent wicked to everlaſting puniſhment, and invite and bring his friends into the poſſeſſion of his eternal kingdom, to enjoy perfect and progreſſing happineſs forever; and that they ſhall ſee, and have a moſt pleaſing and eternally increaſing conviction, when all the enemies of Chriſt are put under his feet, and all things are adjuſted and brought to their proper and deſigned iſſue, that all events which have taken place, even all the evil, ſin and miſery which has been, and will exiſt for ever, are included in the divine purpoſe and plan, which was in the higheſt wiſdom and goodneſs fixed and ordained from eternity, and are neceſſary, in the moſt proper and deſirable manner, and to the higheſt poſſible degree, to promote the glory of God in the moſt clear manifeſtation and brighteſt diſplay of the divine perfections, and produce the higheſt happineſs and glory of the eternal kingdom of God.

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This will be contemplated forever, and will be a ſource of growing entertainment, and part of the happineſs which is included in the Chriſtian's hope. The work of redemption by Chriſt is ſo grand, wonderful and complicated, the effect of infinite power, wiſdom and goodneſs, exerciſed in the moſt aſtoniſhing condeſcention, grace and mercy, truth and faithfulneſs, to infinitely guilty, loſt and miſerable ſinners, in a way honourable to a holy, righteous God, his law and government, and ſuited to humble and ſave ſinful rebels, and raiſe them to the higheſt honour and happineſs; and is attended with ſuch infinitely great, important, glorious, eternal conſequences; that the redeemed muſt enjoy unſpeakably great and increaſing happineſs in ſearching into the wonders of this work, and loving, praiſing and adoring God and the Redeemer forever.

Every true Chriſtian hopes to enjoy all this, and more, which no tongue can utter, or heart conceive; and he ſhall actually poſſeſs it forever. He will ſtand at the right hand of Chriſt at the day of judgment, and enter with all the redeemed into eternal life and happineſs, and enjoy the company and friendſhip of a moſt lovely and happy ſociety, all ſweetly united in love to Chriſt and to each other, under the beſt advantages to enjoy God, in the aſſurance of his favour and love, and to be happy in friendſhip with each other, and make rapid advances in knowledge, holineſs and happineſs forever.—But the theme is endleſs, and it is time to ſtop.—This is the hope of a Chriſtian!

II. The *reaſon* which Chriſtians have to give for this hope which is in them, or entertained by them, is to be conſidered.

This involves two particulars, which are in themſelves really diſtinct, though implied in each other; and therefore it is proper to conſider them ſeparately. They are theſe: The reaſon they have to believe and be ſure that the Chriſtian ſcriptures, the foundation of all their hopes, are a revelation from God, containing infallible truth, without any error, in matters of faith and practice,

tice, and therefore to be relied upon with the greateſt confidence and ſafety; and the reaſon of their hope that they are real Chriſtians, and intereſted in all the bleſſings promiſed in the goſpel to true believers in Chriſt.

*Firſt.* The Chriſtian, in giving the reaſon of his hope, muſt tell what evidence he has that Chriſtianity is a divine inſtitution, and that the ſcriptures which contain a revelation of it were written by the inſpiration of God.

Here Chriſtians are introduced to ſpeak for themſelves, and give the reaſon of placing their hope in Chriſt and the goſpel. They have the following anſwer to give to thoſe who aſk them.

1. We feel the want of a hope of ſome good and happineſs which cannot be obtained and enjoyed in this life, and in this world. We find ourſelves poſſeſſed of thoſe mental capacities and deſires which cannot be filled and ſatisfied with the enjoyment of any or all the things of this world, the objects of time and ſenſe. We know we have a capacity of enjoying a higher and better good than this world affords, and a good which is unfading, and will laſt to be enjoyed without any end; and we feel ſtrong deſires, which we cannot ſuppreſs, of exiſting forever, in the enjoyment of objects which will render us completely happy. This has excited us diligently to ſearch and inquire whether and where any ground and good reaſon can be found for a hope of enjoying the good and happineſs which is anſwerable to our capacity and deſires.

2. If the Bible be excluded, upon the moſt diligent and extenſive ſearch we have been able to make, no ſufficient reaſon has been found, or can be given, for a hope of a good adequate to the capacity and deſires of man. The heathen who have not enjoyed the Bible, even the wiſeſt among them, have not diſcovered any certainty of a future ſtate. And all their conjectures about it, and ideas of happineſs to be enjoyed after death if there be a future ſtate, are ſo vague, uncertain and abſurd, that they can give no ſatisfaction to a rational mind, but tend to the contrary. They have obtained

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no true notions of the character of the true God; ſo far from it, that they repreſent their gods in a ridiculous and ſhameful light, and as practiſing horrible vices. None of them, even their greateſt philoſophers, have been able to find out what true happineſs is. They are indeed, and always have been, without the true God, and without a reaſonable hope in the world.

And this is true of the Mahometans. They profeſs indeed to believe in one God, which Mahomet taught them with a number of other things, who learned them from the Bible, with which he was in ſome meaſure acquainted; but they have no correct, conſiſtent notions of the divine character, eſpecially of his moral character. They do not know of any reaſonable way for ſinners to obtain pardon of their ſins, and the favour of God; and conſequently cannot have any reaſonable hope of this. The moſt ignorant and vicious men among them have a promiſe of their prophet that they ſhall go directly to heaven, if they die fighting for his cauſe and their religion, or if they perform certain preſcribed actions and ceremonies. And the heaven they hope for they think conſiſts, not in holineſs and in the enjoyment of the true God, and the mental happineſs implied in this, but in thoſe ſenſual delights and gratifications, more ſuited for beaſts than men; which are the objects of averſion and abhorrence, and not of hope, to a good and pure mind.

The Infidels, Deiſts and Atheiſts who live in that part of the world called Chriſtian are really without hope. The latter are profeſſedly ſo: they have no belief of a future ſtate, and have no hope of any good which they cannot enjoy in this life, which to every diſcerning mind is nothing but vanity and vexation of ſpirit. Theſe chooſe to view and place themſelves in ſuch a low ſtate of exiſtence that they have no pre-eminence above the beaſts, except that they are capable of ſuffering more pain and miſery than the brute creation.

As to the Deiſts, they profeſs to believe there is a God; but do not appear to worſhip him, or derive any enjoyment from their belief. Many of them, with Atheiſts,

Atheiſts, do not believe there is any future ſtate; but ſay they expect to die as the beaſts, and have no further exiſtence. Others of them conſider it as a matter of uncertainty whether they ſhall exiſt in a future ſtate or not; and they who profeſs to believe they ſhall exiſt after death, can give no ſatisfactory account of the happineſs they ſhall enjoy, nor any reaſon of their hope of happineſs in the forgiveneſs of their ſins and the favour of God, whom they have offended. For reaſon, on which they depend, affords no evidence that God will forgive them; but rather that they muſt fall under his diſpleaſure, and be miſerable forever. They can have no hope from the god they profeſs to believe exiſts. Having renounced the God revealed in the Bible, they are wholly at a loſs about the character of their god. Some of them aſcribe no moral character to him; and they who do, cannot agree in what it is; and none of them can tell whether, or how far, men have any concern in it, ſo as to have any influence on their conduct or happineſs. So that they are all without any reaſonable hope, having renounced the true God.

Therefore, if the Chriſtian hope be not founded upon reaſon and truth, but muſt be given up as fabulous and mere deluſion, we are left without hope, and we muſt ſink into the moſt gloomy darkneſs and deſpair. But,

3. We find in the Bible an exhibition of that good which is ſuited to make us completely and forever happy, containing all that we can deſire or hope for. It reveals a moſt agreeable and wiſe way for the pardon of ſinners, and their reconciliation with God, and to enjoy his favour as much, and to an higher degree, and be much more happy, than if they had never ſinned. It contains repeated and abundant promiſes of deliverance from all evil, and the everlaſting enjoyment of the beſt and higheſt good of which we are or ever ſhall be capable. All this is offered and beſtowed as a free gift on every one who is willing to receive it, and aſketh for it. We will not enter into more particulars here in deſcription of this hope. They have been repreſented in the

former part of this diſcourſe, and will of courſe come into view under the next head. We will only obſerve here, that the infinite good comprehended in the redemption of ſinners, which is the ſubject of the revelation in the Bible, is the only proper and complete object of hope that can be conceived of or imagined by a reaſonable and good mind, if it be true, and there is evidence that it is indeed a revelation which is given to men from God. Which leads us to ſay,

4. There is clear, moſt ſatisfactory and abundant evidence, fully anſwerable to the nature and importance of the ſubject, that the Bible is true, and contains a revelation from God.

But before we enter upon the ſhort and ſummary detail of this evidence which we propoſe to give, the following things will be mentioned.

Though the evidence of the truth of divine revelation is ſufficient to convince the underſtanding and judgment of thoſe who will ſeriouſly attend to the ſubject, though they have bad hearts, and do not really love the truths it contains; yet they cannot have that ſatisfactory aſſurance that it is from God, and indeed a divine revelation, which thoſe of upright and good hearts have, though their underſtandings and mental powers be not ſo bright and ſtrong as thoſe of others whoſe hearts are not good.

It may alſo be obſerved, that truths and objects of a moral and ſpiritual nature may be the objects of as great certainty, yea greater, than thoſe objects and things whoſe exiſtence is known only by our bodily ſenſes; ſo that a man of an honeſt and good heart, and right taſte and diſcerning, would doubt of the truth of the latter, rather than of the former, if one muſt be doubted of and given up as not true.

We would further obſerve here, that if it were poſſible that the Chriſtian hope is a mere deluſion, which we *know* is not true, and is impoſſible; yet we ſhould loſe nothing by entertaining it. We ſhall in the iſſue be as well off as thoſe who have no hope. If we ſhould ceaſe

to

to exist at death, or in whatever state we should be, we should not be in a worse state than others, or than we should be had we not been Christians. We have a high enjoyment in our hope now, which will continue as long as we are in this world. It is constantly better to us than all worldly enjoyments, and we should be great losers by exchanging it with the most happy worldly man, for all his enjoyments. Our hope is a constant source of high enjoyment, which unspeakably more than counterbalances all the uneasiness and sufferings which are occasioned by it, be they ever so many and great. Therefore unbelievers, if they knew we were deluded, which they do not know, and never will, would act an unreasonable, injurious and cruel part, to take our hope from us, if they could, or even to attempt it; for if this could be effected, it would deprive us of more happiness than they ever did or can enjoy, which is better to us than all this world. And we should sink down into the most gloomy state of despair and misery, which they who never had the Christian hope cannot feel or suffer while in this world. *

We now return to the point proposed, to speak of the reason we have of our hope, grounded on the evidence that the gospel is from heaven, which amounts to

* 1. Cor. xv. 19. "*If in this life only we have hope in Christ, we are of all men most miserable.*" These words have been understood by some in a sense which may be thought inconsistent with the sentiments expressed in the above paragraph. But on a careful examination, they will doubtless appear in perfect unison. To hope in Christ only in this life, is really to give up the Christian hope, and Christianity itself, as a groundless fable; and consequently to be deprived of all the enjoyment and happiness derived from Christianity, and the Christian hope, by which they have an unspeakably higher enjoyment, and greater degree of happiness, than unbelievers can have. And as they feel the vanity of all things in this world, their loss is irreparable, and they must feel themselves wretched, and sink into gloom, despair and misery: while the men of the world, by their ignorance, delusion and a worldly mind, knowing no greater good than they have or hope to obtain in the enjoyments of this life, are eagerly pursuing and fondly hoping for worldly good; by which they are, at present, prevented falling into that despair and misery, which will certainly come upon them, when this life shall end.

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as great demonſtrative certainty as there is or can be of any propoſition which was ever propoſed or thought of. We have read the Bible over and over again, and with much more care and attention than we beſtowed on any other book. And the more we have read it, and attended to and underſtood the truths contained in it, the more clear and certain has the evidence appeared of its divine original, and the greater pleaſure we have had in the things which it reveals.

When we enter on this theme, it is not eaſy to determine where to begin, or where to end. There is ſo great a multiplicity of evidence that the ſcriptures contain a revelation from God, and the number of particulars from which this is proved is ſo great, that it would take more time than we now have, to mention all of them. We can only give a ſummary view of this evidence now, which we are ſure is a ſufficient reaſon of our hope, of which we ſhall never be aſhamed.

It is common and proper to diſtinguiſh the evidence that the Bible has a divine original, into that which is called *external*, and that which is *internal*, conſiſting in the doctrines, truths and duties which are revealed and inculcated therein. We ſhall endeavour to conſider theſe ſeparately, though they will naturally, and perhaps to the beſt advantage, be, in ſome inſtances, in a degree blended together. Certainly the honeſt mind will view them together, and at once, as ſtrengthening each other, and amounting to a clear demonſtration of this truth.

The external evidence conſiſts in the manner in which the Chriſtian ſcriptures have been made, and given to the world; the men and their character who wrote them, and the manner of their writing; the miracles which have been wrought in confirmation of the truth of the facts related, and the doctrines and commands made known, and that they who ſpoke and wrote were inſpired by God to ſpeak and do what they did; the numerous predictions of things and events which ſhould come to paſs, many of which were accompliſhed ſoon, others

others have come to pafs long fince they were predicted, and many are fulfilling now before our eyes, in the revolutions which are taking place, and the prefent ftate of the nations and of the world; the fpread of Chriftianity among the nations, by the men who were the principal inftruments of propagating it, and the preservation and continuance of it in the world to this day, notwithftanding the great and conftant oppofition to it which has been made.

Thefe are the chief, but not all, the external evidences of the divine original of the Bible; which muft be more particularly confidered. The men by whom it was written appear to be men of good natural abilities, fenfible, honeft and ferious, as men really infpired by God to write would be. They were not a number of men who lived at the fame time, and could confult together, and lay a fcheme what to write; but lived in different ages, the laft above a thoufand years after the firft who wrote. They do not appear felfifh, proud and vain, to feek their own worldly honour or intereft, but the contrary. The manner of their writing is inimitable, and differs from the writings of all other men. This has been obferved and illuftrated by many authors, and is needlefs for us to repeat. They write an orderly hiftory of the world from the beginning of it to the time of thofe laft events which relate to the fubjects on which they wrote. And this hiftory is carried on by them to the end of the world by their predictions. This is the moft ancient, well authenticated, conftftent, important and ufeful hiftory, that was ever formed by uninfpired men, or ever will or can be. It exhibits one grand fcheme and plan of events, all uniting and confpiring to bring all things to the moft happy iffue, worthy of the infinite Being who is infinitely powerful, wife and good. It is as really impoffible that any uninfpired man or number of men, efpecially who lived in fuch diftant ages of the world, fhould make the writings which we find in the Bible, as it is for them to contrive and make the vifible world: and we have as fatisfying evidence

evidence that the ſcriptures contained in the Bible were written by the inſpiration of God, as we have that the ſun, moon and ſtars, and all the viſible world, were made by him; eſpecially if we take into view the facts which we are now going to mention.

MOSES, who was the firſt writer, gave abundant proof that what he wrote, ſaid and did, was by the inſpiration, command and direction of the true God, by the numerous miracles which he wrought, and the predictions he made, which were fulfilled directly, or in the time of his life, and have been ſince fulfilled. And here we would obſerve, that prophecy, when it is fulfilled, is a real miracle, as abſolute, independent preſcience is an incommunicable attribute of God; and when a man has ability to know and foretel events that are future, this is as much above what are called the laws of nature, as the ability to work any miracle whatever, and is an evidence of divine inſpiration. Therefore miracles, and prophecy which comes to paſs, may be conſidered together, as they are frequently united in the ſame event in the ſcriptures. Thus moſt of the miracles wrought by Moſes in Egypt, at the Red Sea, and in the wilderneſs, during forty years, were accompanied by predictions of the miraculous event before it took place, though the latter was inſtantaneous with the former, and both were of the nature of a miracle. And ſo were all the prophecies of Moſes which have ſince been fulfilled, by which, and by all the miracles done by him, his divine miſſion was fully confirmed, in the view of the whole nation of Iſrael; and this has been handed down through all ages ſince in the church, and been increaſing by the fulfilment of many of his prophecies, and the diſcovery of the import and deſign of the inſtitutions which he appointed, which he declared he received from heaven. And, indeed, all or moſt of the ordinances inſtituted by Moſes contained predictions, pointing out the character of the Saviour who was to come into the world, and what was to be done and ſuffered by him for the redemption of man, which were exactly

exactly fulfilled in him, together with all the predictions of him by the prophets who arose after Moses. All the mosaic institutions, and all the miracles he did, and predictions he uttered, all the miracles and prophecies by the prophets after Moses, with all the events which took place, were designed and suited to prepare the way for that event, the incarnation of the Son of God; so that divine design and wisdom is to be seen, by those who will properly attend, superintending through the whole. It is impossible it should be a mere human contrivance.

At the very time which was pointed out and fixed by the prophets hundreds of years before, when there was consequently a general expectation of the appearance of the promised Saviour, and the state of the Jews and of the world was made ready for such an event, the expected Messiah came, in a character and in just such circumstances as were described and foretold long before by the prophets. He wrought many miracles, by which he proved that he was the Son of God, the very person predicted by the prophets, and taught the most important truth, in a manner which was never done by any mere man. He was a perfect example of humility, meekness, uprightness, benevolence, wisdom and piety, and taught, both by precept and example, the nature and properties of true religion, and the only excellent and perfect morality.—But now we have insensibly run into what properly belongs to the next head, of internal evidence.

He instructed his disciples into the meaning of those prophecies which related to him; and from this, and acquaintance with him, his doctrines and precepts, and the miracles he wrought, they believed with all their heart that he was the Son of God, who was to come into the world. The body of the nation of Jews, especially their teachers and leaders, the scribes and pharisees, were so sunk into depravity and ignorance, their hearts were so very bad and vicious, that they did not understand the prophecies concerning him; nor could they approve of his person, character and doctrines, all

which

which condemned them; but they hated them with a hatred which could not be satisfied till they had put him to a cruel and ignominious death, which he had repeatedly foretold, and the consequent destruction of that nation, to his disciples, and the ancient prophets had predicted. He also said that he should rise from death on the third day. But his enemies had no expectation or belief of this, but were disposed to reject all the evidence that could be given of such a fact. And even his disciples and friends did not understand the prophets nor the words of Christ on this point, and knew not what to think of his being put to death as he was, and were wholly in the dark as to the consequence, till the evidence that he was risen from the dead was irresistibly forced upon them.

When he had given incontestible evidence of his resurrection to a sufficient number of chosen, competent witnesses, who could not be deceived, and conversed with them a considerable time, and given them proper instructions, they declared that they saw him ascend towards heaven in a cloud till out of their sight; and that two angels appeared to them, who told them he was gone to heaven, and would return again at the day of judgment. They retired, and waited till, as he had promised them, they received from heaven miraculous power to bear witness of his resurrection, and proclaim salvation to sinners upon believing in his name. They were soon endued with power, and enabled to work miracles to prove the truth of their testimony that Christ was risen from the dead, and gone to heaven, and had commanded them to preach the gospel to the world, and that in this they said nothing but what was contained in the writings of Moses and the prophets. They went forth, and, contrary to all human probability and expectation of the success of such a small number of poor, low, illiterate men, with such a message, so contrary to the strong prejudices and prevailing customs both of Jews and Gentiles, and to the lusts and evil propensities which naturally reign in the hearts of all men, they

they made numerous converts to Chriſtianity, from among the Jews and the idolatrous heathen.

It is impoſſible that theſe facts ſhould take place, unleſs Chriſtianity were from heaven, and the apoſtles were aſſured that what they related concerning Chriſt was true. That, in their then circumſtances, they ſhould undertake to propagate Chriſtianity, without any worldly motives, and in the proſpect of poverty, diſgrace and ſuffering, which they knew was as contrary to the natural inclinations of men as any thing can be, cannot be accounted for, unleſs on the ſuppoſition they knew that what they declared was true, and moſt important to themſelves and others, and that they could depend upon the promiſe of Chriſt to ſupport and ſucceed them. And it appears to us that their ſucceſs in propagating Chriſtianity, and being ſupported in the midſt of oppoſition and ſuffering, till they had collected a number of churches, is a demonſtration that divine power upheld them, and changed the hearts of men ſo as to diſpoſe them to attend to and receive the goſpel. This was as far above all mere human contrivance and efforts as is the production of the natural world, and cannot be accounted for without ſuppoſing that Jeſus Chriſt is the Son of God, and that the apoſtles were enabled to do thoſe great and wonderful things by his aſſiſting power, agreeable to the relation given of this matter in the Bible.

And that the goſpel has ſpread among the nations, and Chriſtianity has been continued to this day, notwithſtanding the conſtant and ſtrong oppoſition which has been made to it in ſo many ways, is, as we may ſay, a conſtant miracle, and a clear evidence that it has a divine original; and is a demonſtration that it is of God, according to the teſt propoſed by the good ſenſe of the learned Gamaliel. If this counſel, or this work, had been of men, it would have come to nought long ago: but ſince it has continued to this day, and men, with all their cunning and power, with which they have in all ages attempted it, have not been able to overthrow it, its divine original is demonſtrated, and it muſt be of

God. And we are certain that all they who do oppoſe Chriſtianity, and attempt to overthrow it, are fighting againſt God, and will be diſappointed and confounded.

We will finiſh this head by mentioning the ſtate in which the Jews now are, and have been ſince the deſtruction of Jeruſalem and their temple; and the preſent ſtate of the world; which are agreeable to the predictions in the Bible. The ſtate into which the Jews have fallen in conſequence of the crucifixion of Chriſt by that nation, who wiſhed that the guilt of his blood might fall on them and their poſterity, is agreeable to the prophecies of Moſes and the other prophets; to the predictions of Chriſt and the apoſtles; and are, in this view, a ſtanding evidence of the truth of Chriſtianity: which might be illuſtrated by a number of particulars, had we time to mention them. Their continuing a diſtinct people in their diſperſion among the nations of the earth for ſo many ages, which is a ſort of public, continual miracle, holds them in a ſituation in which they are prepared for the viſible accompliſhment of thoſe many predictions and promiſes, which we find in the Bible, of mercy in ſtore for them, by their being made willing to ſubmit to Chriſt, and come into his fold, the Chriſtian church, with the Gentiles: which is a confirming evidence of the truth of the goſpel, and that this happy event will take place. And that the time is not far diſtant appears from other prophecies, and the preſent ſtate of the world.

This leads us to obſerve, that the ſtate of the Chriſtian church from the days of the apoſtles to this time, and to the end of the world, and the ſtate, changes and revolutions of the nations of the world, eſpecially ſo far as they have any relation to the church, are foretold in the prophetic part of ſcripture, particularly by the prophet Daniel, and in the revelation given to the apoſtle John; which have been exactly fulfilled ſo far as they relate to the paſt and preſent time. And we may hence rely upon the accompliſhment of the predictions of the events which are yet to take place.

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The great apoſtacy which has taken place in the church of Chriſt, by Antichriſt or the Pope, by which the church of Rome is become a corrupt, falſe church, was particularly foretold, with many particular circumſtances relating to its character, and treatment of true Chriſtians, &c. the riſe of it, and the time of its continuance, and final overthrow. Many things predicted of this falſe church have already come to paſs, which are publicly known, and needleſs for us now to mention. It is evident that this falſe church, which in ſcripture is called a harlot, with thoſe who ſupport her, and all her appendages, are on the decline, and haſtening to the deſtruction predicted. Five vials of the wrath of God, predicted in the ſixteenth chapter of the prophecy by John, have already been poured out on her, and the ſixth vial is now running, under which Antichriſt is to ſink, and the way be prepared for his final overthrow; which is now taking place in ſight of the world. While this is doing, according to the prophecy, the ſpirits of devils are to be let looſe in the Chriſtian world, as they never were before, and under their influence all orders of men are to become exceeding corrupt and wicked, more generally, and to a greater degree, than ever before, and own themſelves in oppoſition to God and the Redeemer. And do we not ſee this repreſentation faſt fulfilling from year to year? Is it not known that infidelity, Deiſm, Atheiſm, and all kinds of groſs error, and of vice and wickedneſs, which are the genuine fruits of theſe, are rapidly ſpreading, and prevail every where? Surely all muſt be ſenſible of this who can diſcern the ſigns of the times. Let who will ſhut their eyes, and live in ignorance, it appears to us a ſtriking evidence that the events of this time are a fulfilment of the above mentioned prophecy; and that, after the accompliſhment of the events predicted under the ſeventh vial, the millennium, or proſperous and happy ſtate of the church on earth, ſo much the ſubject of prophecy, both in the Old Teſtament and the New, will commence.

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Having, as briefly as we could, ſtated the leading things in which the external evidence that the Bible contains a revelation from heaven conſiſts, we proceed to mention what we call the internal evidence of the ſame truth. This, we think, is more than anſwerable to the fair and promiſing outſide, if we may ſo call it, which we have been conſidering, and is ſuited to eſtabliſh every honeſt and good heart in aſſurance that the goſpel is of God.

The Bible reveals the being, perfections, works and deſigns of God, and ſets them in a more grand, important, rational and deſirable light, than ever has or could be diſcovered by uninſpired men, or has been conceived by any man who is not acquainted with the Bible. God is here repreſented as without beginning to exiſt, omnipotent, omniſcient, omnipreſent, infinitely and unchangeably wiſe and good, juſt, true and faithful; as the Creator of all things, and conſtantly upholding, directing and governing them in all their revolutions and motions; all which are included in a moſt wiſe plan of operation, which has been fixed by him from eternity, is endleſs, abſolutely perfect, and immutable; that he exerciſes a moſt perfect and wiſe *moral* government over all his rational creatures, to whom he gives a natural capacity of moral action, and obedience to all his laws, which are perfect, juſt and good. The law of God reſpects and requires a perfectly right diſpoſition and exerciſes toward him and all fellow creatures; to love him with all the heart, and our neighbour as ourſelves. It aſſures favour and happineſs to the perfectly obedient, and curſes the diſobedient, with a curſe which implies endleſs deſtruction. In ſhort, the Bible reveals ſuch a God as muſt be moſt pleaſing and deſirable to every perfectly innocent and good mind. Such have all they can deſire or wiſh for in ſuch a God, ſuch a law and moral government; therefore to them he is the only true God, and their choſen portion and happineſs; while they know that all the notions that have been entertained of the Divine Character and his law by thoſe who have not taken them from the Bible, and are not conſiſtent with it, are erroneous, fooliſh and wicked.

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The Bible gives a particular and rational account of the creation of this viſible world, which is no where elſe to be found; and of the creation of man, by making one man and one woman, from whom all mankind deſcended. It relates the ſin and apoſtacy of theſe firſt created parents of the human race, and how, by this, total moral depravity and ſinfulneſs came upon all their children, by which they are all, in their natural ſtate, under the curſe of the law of God. That all men are by nature depraved and ſinful, is a fact evident to all who attend to the matter; but how and in what way they are become ſo, none have been able to give any good reaſon, who have not been acquainted with the Bible, or have rejected the account *that* gives of it, which appears rational, conſiſtent and ſatisfactory to thoſe who have an upright and good heart, and even to the ſober reaſon of *all* who examine it without a great degree of prejudice and pride.

But the Bible reveals that which is infinitely more important to us, and to mankind, which never could have been known or thought of by any creature, had not God revealed it. This is the great deſign and work of the redemption of man by Jeſus Chriſt, the Son of God; which is the great ſubject of revelation, as the whole has reference to this, and would be needleſs in any other view. This fixes a divine ſtamp on the whole, as it makes a more clear, full and wonderful manifeſtation and diſplay of the divine perfections, power, wiſdom, holineſs, goodneſs, juſtice, truth, grace and mercy, than otherwiſe could have been done; which cannot be known by thoſe who never heard of this revelation, or who reject it as not coming from God.

In the goſpel all mankind are repreſented as ſinners, tranſgreſſors of the law of God, and under the curſe of it. And a way is opened by which ſinners may be delivered from this curſe, and be recovered to holineſs, the favour of God, and eternal life, conſiſtent with maintaining and honouring the law of God, and diſplaying his juſtice and truth, his hatred of ſin, and diſpoſition to puniſh

puniſh it. This has been effected by the incarnation of the Son of God, who is really God manifeſt in the fleſh; who by his ſuffering unto death in the fleſh, and paying perfect obedience to the law, for man, and in his ſtead, has ſo honoured the law, both the precepts and penalty of it, that God may be juſt, according to the true ſpirit and deſign of it, and pardon and juſtify ſinners who approve of the character and works of the Mediator, and truſt in him. This is the ſum of the matter, which might be enlarged upon, and illuſtrated without end. But we ſhall only ſay now, that to us the wiſdom and all the perfections of God are diſplayed in the goſpel; that this is the true God and eternal life, and that with good reaſon, and with the moſt perfect ſafety, we may place our higheſt hopes on this ſure foundation.

The diſciples of Jeſus appear to give a fair and honeſt hiſtory of what he ſaid and did, and of the treatment he received. They neither give him or themſelves any praiſe, encomiums or flattering titles. They only relate facts reſpecting him, themſelves and his friends and enemies, without making any reflections in his or their own favour, or againſt his enemies. They relate their own faults, without offering any palliation or excuſe. No uninſpired writer ever did, or could, or ever will, write a hiſtory of any particular perſon, or of ſo many important and extraordinary events, in which he is as much intereſted, as thoſe who wrote the hiſtorical part of the New Teſtament were in the facts which they relate, in the manner in which they have written. Chriſt uniformly ſpake and acted with a dignity, condeſcenſion, ſeriouſneſs, wiſdom and prudence which became a perſon of the character which he ſuſtained, and the work he came into the world to perform. He never erred or made the leaſt miſtake in all he ſaid and did.

Chriſt taught the moſt ſublime, important and pure doctrines, reſpecting God and the ſtate of man, the way of his recovery to the favour of God, to holineſs and true happineſs, and in what theſe conſiſt. He taught that God was ſovereign and independent in beſtowing his

his mercy on men; that he had mercy on whom he pleaſed, for which men depend wholly on him; that all men were ſo wholly depraved and wicked at heart, that they refuſed to come to the light when ſet before them; that they hated the light; yea, that they hated him and God his Father, and continued to do ſo, till they were born again of the Spirit of God, by which a new, obedient heart was given; that previous to this they did not underſtand or ſee the things of the Spirit and kingdom of God; therefore all who come to the knowledge of the truth, and embrace the goſpel, are taught of God; in which he has mercy on whom he will have mercy, making the diſtinction according to the dictates of his wiſdom and goodneſs, what will be beſt to promote the higheſt good of the univerſe, which cannot be done by the ſalvation of all. This is clearly and conciſely expreſſed by Chriſt: "All that the Father giveth me ſhall come to me; and him that cometh to me I will in no wiſe caſt out." This recommends the goſpel to us as true and from heaven, as conſiſtent and moſt excellent; as no man or ſet of men, uninſpired, would have repreſented mankind in ſo bad a light, and ſo dependent on God for a new and better heart; or that every thing and circumſtance relating to the ſalvation of men is under the direction of Infinite Wiſdom and Goodneſs; all which is clearly taught in the Bible.

This leads us to ſay, that the goſpel appears to us evidently of divine original, and we are ſure that it is not of man, becauſe it repreſents man as ſo infinitely guilty, odious and ill-deſerving, that he cannot recommend himſelf to the leaſt favour by any thing he can do or ſuffer; and that it is unbecoming the holy and juſt God to pardon and ſave him out of reſpect to any thing good and deſerving in him, but purely on the account of the atonement, righteouſneſs and infinite worthineſs of a Mediator, to whom the unworthy ſinner is united by faith: ſo that the ſalvation of men, from the foundation to the top-ſtone, from beginning to the end, is of mere, ſovereign, wonderful mercy and grace, by which

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man is thoroughly abaſed and humbled, and his ſalvation muſt be aſcribed, not in the leaſt to himſelf, but wholly to the undeſerved, ſovereign grace of God. This is perfectly agreeable to the law of God, and the ſinful, guilty ſtate of man; and there is no other poſſible way in which he could be ſaved, conſiſtent with the divine law, and the guilty ſtate of man. It is impoſſible that this ſhould be the contrivance of man, as it is directly contrary to his thoughts and reigning diſpoſition, and is the principal reaſon of the oppoſition men make to the goſpel, and why none will cordially embrace it till they have a new heart, a heart to confeſs their ſins, and humble themſelves in the ſight of God, and receive offered mercy as a free, undeſerved gift to the infinitely guilty and wretched, and with pleaſure aſcribe all the honour and glory of their ſalvation to God alone; by which they are prepared to enjoy true happineſs, of which they were before wholly ignorant and deſtitute.

We have another all-convincing evidence that the goſpel is true, and has a divine original, from the duties and the nature of the religion taught and enjoined by Chriſt and his apoſtles, which are different from any thing of this kind recommended by men not inſpired, and in many reſpects contrary thereto. The Bible teaches that all true religion has its beginning in the heart of man, in the fear of God, and conſiſts in ſupreme love to him, and unreſerved devotedneſs to his honour and intereſt in all our exerciſes and conduct, which implies conſtant devotion in prayer and praiſe, and a religious acknowledgment of him at all times, and in the proper ſeaſons of public and ſocial worſhip, as well as that which is more private and ſecret. Chriſt ſaid, men muſt deny themſelves, and forſake all they had, for his ſake, in order to be his true diſciples; that they muſt be humble, meek, upright and benevolent, even towards their worſt enemies; do them all the good in their power, and pray for them: forgive thoſe who injured them, and indulge no diſpoſition to retaliate and avenge themſelves; but be harmleſs, and injure no man. In ſum,

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the religion and morality taught in the Bible, eſpecially by Chriſt and his apoſtles, is as much ſuperior, in its reaſonableneſs and excellence, to any thing of the kind which has been taught by men who have not derived their ſentiments from revelation, as light is to darkneſs, and is perfectly ſuited to make thoſe who heartily embrace it and conform to it happy in this world and forever. And we muſt further obſerve, that the religion and morality inculcated in the Bible is urged by the ſtrongeſt motives, not only as moſt reaſonable, and tending to render ſociety happy in this world; but as it is enjoined by divine authority, with the promiſe of eternal happineſs to all who obey, and an awful threatening of endleſs puniſhment to all others; in which oppoſite ſtates all ſhall be fixed at the great day of general judgment.

We have now, in a ſummary way, given the reaſons of our belief and aſſurance that the Bible contains a divine revelation, and of our hope in Chriſt. We ſee enough in him to ſatisfy us, even all we can wiſh, or hope for, or deſire; enough to make us happy, beyond our preſent conception, in his eternal kingdom; and not us only, but all that ſhall believe on him, which we would earneſtly urge on all thoſe to whom we have acceſs; knowing that all who believe ſhall be ſaved, and all who do not believe on him ſhall be damned.

We are ſenſible that Chriſtianity has been greatly oppoſed in all ages ſince its inſtitution, and much has been written, and many objections have been made, againſt it, by men of great parts and learning, which have been fully and abundantly refuted by Chriſtian writers, ſome of whoſe writings we have ſeen. We know alſo that infidelity has greatly increaſed of late, and is now increaſing; and that many, who profeſs to believe Chriſtianity to be true, are rejecting the moſt eſſential doctrines of it, and there are many others who do not cordially embrace it, or live anſwerable to the precepts of it. But this is ſo far from making us heſitate, or abating our belief and confidence of the truth of it, that

we conſider it as a confirmation that it is from God. For if mankind be ſo corrupt and wicked as to be enemies to the true God, which the Bible aſſerts, and is proved by their general conduct, then they muſt diſlike and be enemies to all the manifeſtations of his character, and whatever he requires as moſt agreeable to him. Beſides, the Bible relates many inſtances of this oppoſition to the truth, and predicts that the goſpel would be oppoſed and rejected by men. Chriſt ſays to his diſciples, "Behold, I ſend you forth as ſheep in the midſt of wolves, and ye ſhall be hated of all men for my name's ſake." And the Bible ſays, "The time will come, when men will not endure ſound doctrine; and ſhall turn away their ears from the truth, and ſhall be turned unto fables." And it has been obſerved, that the preſent infidelity and wickedneſs which prevail in Chriſtendom is particularly predicted in the Bible. Notwithſtanding all this, we know the truth of the goſpel is great, and will overcome; and that the gates of hell ſhall not prevail againſt it.

Finally: We know that the Bible could not be invented and forged by diſhoneſt, wicked men; for this is for many reaſons not only improbable, but impoſſible. And we know that no honeſt, good men would have any hand in it, if it were a forgery. It follows that the very exiſtence of it, in the form in which it is, is a demonſtration that it came from God, and was written by divine inſpiration. We have as great and full evidence of this, yea, greater, than we have of the exiſtence of the viſible world, or of any thing which we perceive by our bodily ſenſes.*

* The above evidences of the truth and divine origin of Chriſtianity, it is ſuppoſed every Chriſtian is, or ought to be, able to produce on all proper occaſions. Others are omitted, together with anſwers to the objections which are made to the Bible, becauſe every Chriſtian may not be ſuppoſed able readily to exhibit them. A more ample and able vindication of Chriſtianity is contained in Dr. TRUMBULL'S *Twelve Sermons on the Divine Origin of the Holy Scriptures*, and Mr. FULLER'S treatiſe entitled, *Chriſtianity its own Evidence*, &c: both which are recommended as worthy of the peruſal of all.

SERMON

# Sermon II.

The ſame Subject continued.

1 Peter, iii. 15. *And be ready always to give an anſwer to every man that aſketh you a reaſon of the hope that is in you, with meekneſs and fear.*

SECONDLY. Chriſtians, in giving the reaſon of the hope that is in them, muſt give the reaſon, not only of their belief and aſſurance that the goſpel is true, and a revelation from heaven; but alſo the reaſon of their hope that they do cordially embrace it, and are intereſted in all the bleſſings which are promiſed to all true believers. When they, in proper times and circumſtances, are aſked the reaſon of this their hope, by thoſe who appear to want information, and to have a right to it, and it may promote a good and important end, they can make the following anſwer.

We all hope that we are friends to Chriſt, and are intereſted in the promiſes he has made to thoſe who believe in him. But our hope is ſtronger or weaker at different times, according to the ſtrength and conſtancy, or weakneſs and inconſtancy, of our religious exerciſes, and the conſciouſneſs we have of them, and the ſight of our own hearts. We ſometimes attain a degree of aſſurance, or that confidence which excludes all ſenſible doubts; but many of us, perhaps the moſt, have often many doubts, and ſome of us have *generally* many doubts and fears. Others are generally more confident, and ſeldom if ever doubt of their being real Chriſtians. What is the cauſe of this difference it is impoſſible for us to determine; at leaſt in many caſes. But this we are confident of, that it is owing to our imperfection in knowledge, diſcerning, or Chriſtian exerciſes, if we be real Chriſtians, that we have the leaſt doubt of it, and do not always enjoy

joy an aſſurance that we are friends to Chriſt. At the ſame time we believe that the reaſon why ſome real Chriſtians do not admit a doubt of their being Chriſtians, is, their imperfection in knowledge, diſcerning, and Chriſtian experience. There are others who profeſs to be aſſured conſtantly, without one doubt for a long courſe of years, that they are Chriſtians, and ſhall be ſaved, whoſe life and converſation diſcover that they know not what it is to be a *real* Chriſtian. But we will proceed to give the reaſon of our hope.

In the firſt place we would obſerve, that we truſt we have been convinced of ſin, and reproved for it, by the Spirit of God, as none are but thoſe to whom he applies the benefits of redemption. Antecedent to our hearts being renewed by divine power to new and gracious exerciſes, we were, the moſt of us, if not all, brought to a degree of painful conviction of our ſinful and miſerable condition, which we believe is the way which God commonly takes with thoſe whom he deſigns to ſave. But as ſuch conviction, and the exerciſes that accompany it, are ſo different in different perſons, as to their degree, the length of their continuance, the attempts and exertions they make to help themſelves, and the particular means by which they have taken place and continued; we ſhall not try to give account of them, which every one may do for himſelf, when it may be convenient. Beſides, it would be deviating from our preſent purpoſe, which is, to give the reaſon of our hope that we are Chriſtians, to enter into a deſcription of the convictions of which the unregenerate may be the ſubjects. For no convictions or exerciſes which take place in the mind of a ſinner, antecedent to his regeneration, or his having a new heart, can be any ſcriptural evidence that he ever will be renewed and become a Chriſtian. There is no connection in nature, or by the declarations and promiſes of ſcripture, between any convictions and exerciſes of the unregenerate, and their becoming Chriſtians. In any ſtage or degree of their convictions, change of ſentiments, or external reformation, all may come to a full ſtop,

ſtop, and be loſt; or, if they continue in any degree, they may never iſſue in a true converſion. We therefore mean to ſpeak only of that conviction of ſin, and humiliation for it, which is an evidence of our being regenerated, as it can take place only in a renewed heart, and is connected with ſalvation.

Our eyes have been opened to ſee that the law of God, which requires our obedience to it, reſpects the heart and every motion and exerciſe of it which is of a moral nature, requiring that they all ſhould be perfectly right and in conformity to it, and forbidding every thing contrary to this rectitude of heart, on pain of eternal puniſhment; that this law is perfectly right and good in all the requirements and threatenings of it. This has been attended with a conviction of the exceeding wickedneſs of our hearts, being wholly contrary to the law of God, and the ſource of every thing wrong in our outward actions. We could not but approve of the law as right, holy and good, and felt that we were wholly blameable for every thing in our heart and life contrary to this law, and were wholly without excuſe. Our heart appeared to us to be naturally wholly depraved and wicked, and all ſin againſt God ſo infinitely criminal and vile, and we ſo unſpeakably guilty, having done nothing but ſinning againſt God and his law, that we felt and acknowledged from the heart that we deſerved to have the penalty of the law executed upon us, that God would be juſt and glorious in doing it, and we muſt juſtify him in it, and remain forever without the leaſt reaſon of complaint. Thus we ſubmitted to God, and accepted the puniſhment of our iniquity, and felt a calmneſs and pleaſure we never experienced before, in viewing with delight the divine character exhibited in his law, and works of creation and providence. We knew our heart to be naturally ſo totally depraved and wicked, hard, obſtinate and impenitent, that it would never be made better by us, or by any means or creature, unleſs it were renewed by the almighty power of God, which he was under no obligation to do; that we were

were utterly undone and loſt in ourſelves, that we were in the hands of God, as the clay is in the hand of the potter, to deal with us according to his ſovereign pleaſure; and we heartily acquieſced in this, in being thus dependent on him. And when we were brought to a more particular and realizing view of Chriſt, and the way of ſalvation by him, (of which we ſhall ſpeak preſently) our ſins and the evil that is in our heart appeared in a worſe light to us, and unſpeakably aggravated, in that it was neceſſary that Chriſt ſhould ſuffer ſo much to make atonement for ſin, in which ſuch great and aſtoniſhing love to ſinners was manifeſted. Our abuſe of the goſpel, and diſpoſition to ſlight and reject Jeſus Chriſt, of which we had been actually guilty in ways and inſtances innumerable, appeared to us great and aggravated beyond deſcription, and diſcovered the exceeding malignity and baſeneſs of our heart; the wickedneſs and obſtinacy in refuſing to accept Chriſt offering himſelf clothed with love and ſalvation. Oh, who can expreſs or fully conceive of the magnitude and aggravations of the ſin of impenitence and unbelief, of which they are guilty who live under the goſpel, and will not embrace it!

Thus we have been convinced of ſin, and reproved for it, and we truſt have ſubmitted to the reproof in the exerciſe of repentance, condemnation, ſhame and abhorrence of ourſelves. We think this is deſcribed by Chriſt when he ſays, "And when he is come (that is, the Holy Spirit) he will reprove the world of ſin: of ſin, becauſe they believe not on me." And here we would obſerve, that this conviction of ſin, from the beginning of it, and in its progreſs, has been attended with an evidence to us that the Bible is true and from God, in that it deſcribes the character of man to be the ſame which we found ours to be, when we ſaw the depravity and wickedneſs of our hearts. This deſcription is given in the relation of the facts by which men in different circumſtances have in all generations acted out and diſcovered the depravity and great degree of wickedneſs of their hearts,

hearts, and in the many particular aſſertions of the great and total depravity of the human heart. And the goſpel is founded on this, that mankind are all ſinners to ſuch a degree that they are wholly loſt and undone, dead in treſpaſſes and ſin, enemies to God, and under the curſe of the law, which is vindicated and honoured, both in the commands and threatenings of it, by the goſpel: and it aſſerts that man is naturally ſo under the power of ſin that he hates the light of truth, and will not come to it, but chooſes to remain in the darkneſs of ſin, till he is born from above, and has a new heart given to him. We are aſſured that no men not inſpired by God would have written ſuch a book, which repreſents man in a light ſo contrary to what men naturally think of themſelves, or ever would have thought of it. We are ſenſible that our ignorance of ourſelves, before we were convinced of our own ſinfulneſs, as we have been deſcribing it, was the ground of our ignorance of the Bible, and our criminal diſregard to it, and by this conviction we have been confirmed in the truth of divine revelation, as we never were before. And we are certain beyond a doubt, that all the profeſſed and open infidelity, or ſecret diſbelief of the truth of the goſpel, is owing to a want of a true and real conviction of ſin. And in this view, we do not wonder at their unbelief; for how can they who are ſo wholly ignorant of their own moral character, and of their ſtanding in any need of the proviſion made in the goſpel, believe and embrace it? How can they believe who are proud, and have ſo high an opinion of themſelves, and ſeek honour one of another? As well may they who feel themſelves perfectly ſound and whole, think they want a phyſician.

We would obſerve further, that the conviction of ſin and reproof for it has not been a tranſient thing, which ſoon paſſed away and was forgotten: contrary to this, it abides by us, continues and increaſes. Our hope of pardon of all our ſins, and of ſalvation by Chriſt, does not abate, but increaſes it. We ſee more and more the evil nature of ſin, and the ill deſert of it, as we increaſe in our

our ſenſe of the righteouſneſs and excellency of the law of God, the wiſdom of the goſpel, and the worthineſs and glory of God and the Redeemer. And we daily ſee more and more of the ſinfulneſs of our own hearts, our indwelling depravity, that ſin cleaves to us in all our exerciſes, and defiles them. We have an increaſing ſenſe of our deſert of everlaſting deſtruction; of our conſtant and abſolute dependence on Chriſt, his atonement and righteouſneſs, for pardon and juſtification, and to renew our hearts, and for every right thought and exerciſe, of which aſſiſtance and grace we are infinitely unworthy; therefore, if we ſhall be ſaved, it muſt be all of free, undeſerved grace. This conviction and ſenſe of ſin, and of our own helpleſſneſs and infinite unworthineſs, accompanies all our exerciſes of religion and piety, as eſſential to them, and increaſes as we grow in grace, and in the knowledge of our Lord and Saviour Jeſus Chriſt.

We proceed to ſay, when we were led to a particular view of Jeſus Chriſt, his character, work and deſign, all this appeared as a reality, and the wiſdom, love and grace of God ſhined in him and the way of ſalvation by him, in a new, glorious and affecting light. And we could not but highly approve of all this, and the whole character of Chriſt, and were filled with wonder and pleaſure. We ſaw there was all fulneſs in Chriſt, enough to ſupply every want of ſuch ſinners as we were; that there was every thing in him that we could deſire, and nothing undeſirable; and that all he has for ſinners is freely offered, without money and without price, to all who are willing to accept of it. This view and ſenſe of heart of the truth of the goſpel, and of the worthineſs and excellence of Chriſt, and approbation of his character, and the way of ſalvation by him, is ſo fixed in our hearts, that we have never loſt it, though it is ſometimes more clear, impreſſive and affecting than at others.

Thus we have deſcribed the conviction and reproof we had of ſin, and our conſequent view and approbation of Chriſt and the goſpel, as ſome of us have ſenſibly experienced

experienced these in this order, and it is the order of nature; for it is impossible that any man who is not convinced of sin and reproved for it, so as to submit to God, approve of his character as legislator, and of his law, should understand and approve of the gospel. Though there may be some, yea, many of us, who have not so distinctly and sensibly discerned the operations of their own minds as to ascertain the order in which their convictions and exercises took place, yet they are sensible they have had them all, as to substance, sooner or later, in a greater or less degree. Some of us have remained a longer and more sensible time, after we submitted to God in the manner which has been described, before we had clear and affecting views of Christ and the gospel, than others, and our views of the latter have been more gradual. Others have had all crowded on their minds so much at once as not to be able to distinguish the former from the latter, so as to say which was first or last, from the perception of their own minds. And there is a great variety in the degree, way and manner, time and means, in and by which these things have taken place in different persons. Yet the work and effect appear to be the same, as to substance and the essentials of it.

Not one of us have entertained a hope that we shall be saved, or have been led to approve of the gospel, and become friendly to God and his law, wholly from a persuasion somehow impressed on our minds, that Christ died for us and would save us, or something like this: for it is impossible that such a persuasion, be it ever so clear and strong, should be true, and therefore must be false, and a great and dangerous delusion: and they whose religion is built on this foundation only, are building on the sand, and going to inevitable ruin.

Our hope that we belong to Christ, and shall be saved by him, is built on the evidence we think we have that we have cordially embraced the gospel, and have been brought to the exercise of the Christian graces, such as repentance, faith in Christ, love to God, our fellow

Chriſtians and our neighbours, or any of thoſe Chriſtian graces which are implied in theſe, and connected with them. Some of us, we believe, have, at their firſt converſion, had ſuch clear and impreſſive views of the truth and excellence of the goſpel, that they not only knew it was divine, but alſo that they did embrace it with all their heart, and ſtrength of mind; that they were turned from darkneſs to marvellous light, and conſequently ſhould be ſaved; and the Spirit of God has ſo excited holy affections, and ſhined on his own work, as to be a witneſs with their ſpirits that they were born of God: and ſome have been ſo happy as to enjoy this evidence all their days, without much interruption; eſpecially thoſe who have been called to labour and ſuffer much for the cauſe of Chriſt and religion. There are others who at the time or their converſion have had ſuch great light and ſtrong affections, that they were confident, without the leaſt doubt, that they had paſſed from death to life, who yet have ſoon fallen into darkneſs and doubts, whether they were really converted or not: others, who have had ſuch miſtaken notions about converſion, and the feelings and exerciſes in which it conſiſted, and of Chriſtians, previous to their own converſion and after it, that when they really paſſed this change they did not know, and had not one thought that they were converted then, and for a conſiderable time after. But as real Chriſtian exerciſes continued, and perhaps on ſome occaſions roſe higher, upon reflection on their own paſt experience and exerciſes, they have entertained a hope that they were real Chriſtians; and the evidence of this has increaſed on paſſing through trials, and their hope has grown into a confidence which often excludes all doubt. All theſe differences, and thoſe which have been before mentioned, and many others not mentioned, may and do take place among real Chriſtians, from cauſes and for reaſons which we do not pretend to be able fully to explore and explain. If they have been convinced of ſin; have ſubmitted to to God, and embraced the goſpel in the manner before

ſtated;

ſtated; and have and exhibit the further evidence that they are Chriſtians which we now proceed to mention; they may reaſonably think themſelves ſuch, and muſt be embraced by us as the friends of Chriſt.

Our evidence that we have really embraced the goſpel, by which our hope is ſupported and ſtrengthened, ariſes from thoſe exerciſes, and the conduct, which have attended or followed the things which have been already mentioned.

When we underſtood and believed the goſpel, as before deſcribed, it had a powerful influence on our hearts and affections, which is laſting, and never wholly loſt; at ſome times leſs ſenſible, at others more ſo, and is on the whole, we hope, increaſing. We were brought into a new moral and ſpiritual world, and our affections were taken off from the things, the enjoyments and pleaſures of this world, on which they were before fixed, as the great and chief good; and fixed on the infinitely important, glorious and beautiful objects of the inviſible and ſpiritual world revealed in the Bible. Our minds have been ſo renewed and transformed by divine power accompaning the goſpel, we hope, that we have no longer lived unto ourſelves; but have with ſtrong affection devoted ourſelves to Chriſt, and given ourſelves away to him, to ſerve him, and promote his honour and intereſt. And in our attention to his character, and the truths contained in the goſpel, our affections and the exerciſes of our minds are excited to a higher degree and greater ſtrength than they ever were towards any worldly object, or poſſibly could be: at the ſame time we are conſcious that they are not flighty and imaginary, but ſolid and rational. We feel a fixed determination and reſolution to follow Chriſt, and adhere to the practice of Chriſtianity, by divine aſſiſtance: and whatever we were before, and though ſome of us were openly vicious, we are, by the knowledge of the goſpel, and the power it has had on our hearts, become ſtrictly conſcientious, in all our thoughts, exerciſes of heart, words and actions; watchful and careful that they all

may

may be conformable to the divine commands. And what is found contrary to theſe in our hearts, of which we ſee much, we lament, and, with pain and ſorrow, condemn. As to all external vicious conduct in words and actions, we hope we are thoroughly reformed, and condemn and abhor ourſelves for being guilty of them, and for all our ſins; and have an earneſt longing to be delivered from all ſin, and to become perfectly holy, which we hope is what Chriſt means by "hungering and thirſting after righteouſneſs." We think this change in us could not be wrought by any thing ſhort of divine power, accompanying the goſpel, by which it has been made unto us "the power of God unto our ſalvation." And we hope we have received "the ſpirit of power, and of love, and of a ſound mind."

We hope we have received from God the ſpirit of *love*, ſuch love which in the nature and exerciſes of it differs from all kinds of love natural to man, and is peculiar to Chriſtians, and conformable to the moral character of God, which conſiſts in *love*. This love conſiſts moſt eſſentially in diſintereſted good will, or goodneſs of heart. This has fixed our hearts in the firſt place and chiefly on God, in cordial and ſtrong deſires that he may be exalted, infinitely bleſſed and glorified forever, and readineſs to devote ourſelves to anſwer this end: and when we reflect on the ſubject, and learn that God is glorifying himſelf by every thing that has, does or will take place to eternity, we are highly pleaſed, and rejoice. And when we conſider that the work of redemption by Jeſus Chriſt, the Son of God, is ſuited to make the greateſt diſplay of the divine perfections, both in them who ſhall be ſaved and in them who periſh; and that all the ſin and miſery that do or ever ſhall take place, will ſerve to praiſe and glorify Chriſt, and promote the greateſt poſſible good of the univerſe; and that Chriſt will bring the redeemed and all the friends of God to the higheſt happineſs and glory in his eternal kingdom, even to unſpeakably greater happineſs than could poſſibly have taken place if no ſin and miſery had

ever

ever exiſted, and conſequently there could have been no ſuch character as that of God manifeſted in the fleſh, and no ſuch works as he has done to glorify God and redeem the elect; when we conſider and realize all this, we are filled with comfort, wonder and joy, finding in this divine plan all that benevolence can wiſh, even the higheſt poſſible good of the univerſe. This is an object ſuited in the higheſt poſſible degree to pleaſe the benevolent, and to raiſe their gratitude to the higheſt pitch to the God of love, and Redeemer of men.

This ſame love, which fixes our hearts on God, and renders us friendly to his being, felicity and glory, and cauſes us to rejoice that he will be glorified, and produce the greateſt good of which the created univerſe is capable, unites us alſo to all the friends of God; eſpecially the friends of Chriſt among men, whom we conſider as our brethren and ſiſters in Chriſt, who bear the image of Chriſt in their hearts, and are friends to, and labouring to promote, his intereſt among men, in which we alſo are engaged; who are the ſpecial objects of the benevolence, complacency and delight of Chriſt. For theſe we have a peculiar friendſhip, deſiring and rejoicing in their welfare, loving to ſerve them, and do them all the good we can; and we have a peculiar complacency and delight in them and their friendſhip, converſation and company, which we cannot enjoy in others. This, we hope, is that love of our brethren which in the ſcripture is connected with love to God, and is peculiar to true Chriſtians.

We hope we have that benevolent, univerſal love to all our fellow men which is peculiar to Chriſtians, which leads us to wiſh them the greateſt good they are capable of enjoying in this life and in the world to come, and to do good as far as we have an opportunity. And we hope we love even our enemies, ſo that whatever evil they do, or attempt or deſire to do us, this does not make us to ceaſe to wiſh them well, and to do them all the good we can, and to pray heartily for their welfare; always ſtudying and endeavouring, if it be poſſible, to live in peace with all men.

We

We have been led by our acquaintance with Chriſt and the goſpel, we hope, in ſome good meaſure to keep our bodies under, and crucify the fleſh with the affections and luſts; to avoid all intemperance and unlawful ſenſual indulgence, and lay aſide paſſion, anger, envy and malice; and to put on humility, meekneſs, and a calm and quiet ſpirit; and to practiſe that ſelf-denial, and government of ourſelves, our appetites and particular propenſities and inclinations, according to the holy rules of the goſpel, ſo as not to injure ourſelves or any one elſe by the criminal indulgence of them. We hope our ſelfiſhneſs or covetouſneſs, pride and levity of mind have been ſo far ſubdued as not to reign in us; and that the contrary principles of benevolence, humility and ſober-mindedneſs have dominion in our hearts; that we ſet our affection on things above, and not on things on the earth; that we ſee the vanity of the world and the things and enjoyments of it; and are impreſſed with a ſenſe of the reality, importance and excellence of the things and enjoyments of religion, and feel unhappy when theſe things are in any meaſure out of ſight, and our religious exerciſes reſpecting them do ſenſibly ſubſide.

We love and greatly prize the Bible. It is better to us than all the riches in the world, or than all other books. We alſo prize and read the books which ſerve to explain the Bible, and vindicate the doctrines and duties contained in it. We have great delight in reading and meditating on the Bible, eſpecially at times, when the truths we find there are impreſſed on our minds. We make the Bible the rule of our faith and practice.

We ſpend much time, when we are alone eſpecially, in meditating on the ſubjects of religion, and are pleaſed with religious converſation in the company of Chriſtians. We have great pleaſure in ſecret prayer, eſpecially when, as we think, the Holy Spirit enlarges our hearts and helps our infirmities, in a clear and affecting view of divine things. We are pleaſed with joining with others in ſocial worſhip when we have opportunity, either in the families where we live, in private Chriſtian ſocieties, or

or in public aſſemblies. The Chriſtian ſabbath, and the inſtitution of baptiſm and the Lord's ſupper, appear to us to be wiſe and good, ſuited to promote the higheſt good of men, and the honour of Chriſt, and we endeavour conſcientiouſly to attend upon them; and are much inſtructed and edified by the *preaching* of the goſpel, when the great truths of it are explained and vindicated, and the duties therein revealed are properly urged, and the preacher with ſuitable engagedneſs declares all the counſel of God.

We hope we live in the exerciſe of an unconditional ſubmiſſion to God, without making any reſerve, with reſpect to all the events which do or ſhall take place, whether greater or ſmaller, and whether they relate more immediately to ourſelves, or to the church, or to the world in general. We firmly believe that God has determined, and does order, every thing, every event, both great and ſmall, that comes to paſs, according to the counſel of his own will, which is perfectly wiſe and good; and we are diſpoſed and love to ſay, *Thy will be done*, with reſpect to all events which do take place now, or ſhall come to paſs. Nor do we, and we dare not, aſk for any thing in prayer to God which we do not know is agreeable to his will to grant, abſolutely, but conditionally, *if it be agreeable to his will* to do it; if it be not, we are prepared to ſay from the heart, Thy will be done. We have ſuch a conſtant conviction and confidence that the divine will is infinitely wiſe, right and good, that it is matter of ſupport, comfort and joy, that the Lord God Omnipotent reigns, and hath done, and will forever do, whatſoever pleaſeth him, being infinitely above all controul; ſo that his counſel ſtandeth forever, and the thoughts of his heart to all generations.

We add in the laſt place, that we truſt that our converſation and conduct before the world is agreeable to our Chriſtian profeſſion, and the holy rules of the goſpel. If this were not true, but the contrary, we acknowledge all our ſuppoſed inward exerciſes, which have been mentioned as evidences of our Chriſtianity, are not to be relied

lied upon by us, and may be juſtly conſidered as mere deluſion by all others. But if what we ſuppoſe be true, for which we appeal to all who are acquainted with us, and we have been brought by the influence of the goſpel of the grace God to deny all ungodlineſs, and every worldly luſt, and to live ſoberly, righteouſly and godly in this preſent evil world; we think it to be a ſtrengthening evidence, in connection with our inward convictions and exerciſes which we have experienced, and have now related, that we are the ſubjects of the power of Divine Grace; and that, whatever we once were, we are now waſhed, and ſanctified, and juſtified, in the name of the Lord Jeſus, and by the Spirit of our God; and that all who behold our blameleſs and good converſation in Chriſt, ought to conſider it as an evidence in our favour, and of the truth and excellence of Chriſtianity; and that they who ſpeak evil of us as of evil doers, and falſely accuſe us, ought to be aſhamed.

Thus we have endeavoured to give an honeſt and true account of the reaſon of the hope we entertain, that by believing the goſpel it is become the power of God to us, to our ſalvation. We have omitted ſome things which might have been mentioned, and perhaps have made ſome needleſs repetitions. Imperfect as this account is, we wiſh it may prove ſome advantage to Chriſtians, and matter of conviction to unbelievers.*

III. The reaſonableneſs and importance of the direction and command which has been explained, is to be conſidered and proved. This may be done by the following obſervations.

* It is ſuppoſed that the evidence given above by Chriſtians, of their hope of a ſaving intereſt in Chriſt, is common to every real Chriſtian, without which no man has reaſon to think himſelf to be one. But in many other particulars, not mentioned here, Chriſtians may differ, and one have views and exerciſes which another has not experienced in the ſame manner and degree, which may be a ſtrengthening evidence to thoſe who have them, and to thoſe to whom they relate them, that they have taſted that the Lord is gracious. If any deſire to ſee the ſubject treated more largely, they are referred to Preſident EDWARDS on *Religious Affections*.

1. It

1. It muſt be ſuppoſed that every real Chriſtian is able to comply with this direction, and can give the reaſon of his hope, when properly inquired of and aſked. If this were not true, the command, which extends to all Chriſtians, would be indeed unreaſonable and nugatory. It is therefore reaſonable to ſuppoſe and be certain that every Chriſtian has good reaſon for the hope that is in him, and can give it when there is a call for it. This is a ſubject which he thinks upon and ſtudies more than any other. He certainly does meditate upon it night and day. He conſiders and examines over and over again the evidence he has of the truth and divinity of Chriſtianity. The theme is familiar to his mind, and the evidence of the truth increaſes, in his view, in ſtrength and clearneſs; and, of courſe, he is conſtantly, and with ſolemn concern, conſidering the evidence he has of his being a real Chriſtian. He muſt therefore be always ready to give the reaſon of this hope that is in him. And it is reaſonable and important that Chriſtians ſhould do this, when aſked, becauſe,

2. It is greatly for the advantage and benefit of Chriſtians to be prepared and ready to give the reaſon of their hope, and actually to do it, when they are aſked in a proper manner.

This has a greater tendency to keep their minds awake to theſe ſubjects than mere private meditation; to increaſe their knowledge in theſe things, and to ſtrengthen and invigorate their exerciſes, and eſtabliſh their own hearts in the ground and reaſon of their hope. Free and ſerious converſation upon intereſting ſubjects of religion is attended with advantages to Chriſtians, which could not be enjoyed if every one kept all his religious thoughts and exerciſes wholly to himſelf. This is confirmed by reaſon and the experience of Chriſtians. And many, if not all, have found, by communicating to others the reaſons of their belief in Chriſtianity, and of their hope that they themſelves were Chriſtians, their hearts more eſtabliſhed in the truth and importance of the Bible, and their hope of ſalva-

tion by Chriſt become more clear and ſtrong, by being quickened in their religious exerciſes.

3. A compliance with this command tends, many ways, to the good of others. It tends greatly to the benefit of Chriſtians to converſe with each other freely on theſe ſubjects; to communicate to one another their reaſons for believing the goſpel, and how, and in what way, they were brought to a clear conviction and aſſurance of the truth and divinity of it; and what have been their views and exerciſes, on which they ground their hope that they do cordially embrace the goſpel, and are the real friends of Chriſt. By this they become particularly acquainted with each other, and obtain the knowledge of the diſcerning, views and exerciſes of their hearts, which could not be ſo well and fully obtained in any other way. This lays a foundation for an intimacy, love and friendſhip, which are ſweet, edifying, laſting, and peculiar to Chriſtians. This tends to increaſe the knowledge of Chriſtians, and eſtabliſh their hearts in the belief of the truth, and excite and quicken their Chriſtian affections, while they hear others give the reaſon of the hope that is in them. And this appears to be an important part of Chriſtian communion, while they drink into the ſame Spirit, and mutually partake of the comfort and bleſſings of the goſpel.

This alſo has a tendency to promote the beſt good of unbelievers. If Chriſtians have nothing to ſay for themſelves, and are ſilent, when they who are not Chriſtians, with apparent ſerious deſire to know, aſk them to give the reaſon of their hope, this will greatly tend to prejudice them againſt Chriſtianity and profeſſed Chriſtians, and lead them to think that the goſpel is unreaſonable, and cannot be ſupported. But when they find Chriſtians able and ready to give the reaſon of their hope, when aſked, and they have it laid before them, they have matter of conviction that Chriſtians can ſpeak for themſelves, and that Chriſtianity is founded in reaſon and truth; and it may by divine influence reach

reach their hearts, as the means of their ſalvation. And doubtleſs this has been the means of the ſalvation of many. But if this ſhould not be the happy conſequence, and the unbeliever perſiſt in rejecting the goſpel to his own deſtruction, the Chriſtian has done his duty; and his labour ſhall not be in vain in the Lord, but anſwer ſome important end.

4. In this way Chriſtians honour Chriſt and his cauſe. They who are not able, or are not diſpoſed, to give the reaſon of their Chriſtian hope when properly aſked to do it, muſt be numbered among thoſe who are aſhamed of Chriſt and of his words. Of ſuch, he ſays, ſhall the Son of Man be aſhamed, when he cometh in the glory of the Father, with the holy angels. He will conſider and treat them as a diſgrace and diſhonour to him, ſhould he own them to be his diſciples and friends. But, on the contrary, he ſays, "Whoſoever ſhall confeſs me before men, him will I confeſs alſo before my Father who is in heaven, and before the angels of God." As theſe, by confeſſing him before men, honour him, he will honour them before the univerſe, in his ſtate of the higheſt exaltation and glory. They who are able and ready to give the reaſon of their Chriſtian hope to thoſe who aſk them, to whatever ſhame and ſufferings they may expoſe themſelves by this, do hereby confeſs and honour Chriſt before men, which they cannot do effectually in any other way, if this be refuſed or neglected. And this is one important way for Chriſtians to exhibit their true character, and ſhow their zeal and courage in the cauſe of Chriſt, and honour and promote it in the world. How reaſonable then and important is this injunction of the Apoſtle!

## IMPROVEMENT.

I. FROM this text, and the ſubject, we have warrant to conclude, that they who are not able to give a reaſon for their hope in the ſenſe explained, or they who refuſe to do it to any one, at any time, are not real Chriſtians, whatever they may pretend.

There

There are too many, who would pafs for Chriftians, who can give no good reafon why they believe Chriftianity to be true and divine, or why they hope to be faved by it. They can give no account of any particular, fenfible impreffions made on their hearts by any of the truths of the gofpel, or of any view or exercife which indicates a real change of heart. There are others to whom the general arguments for the truth of the gofpel are familiar, and they can talk well and readily upon fome of them; but if they be afked what their own inward exercifes are with refpect to the gofpel, and what is the ground of their hope that they are Chriftians, their mouths are immediately fhut, and they have nothing to fay, unlefs it be to object againft the propriety of afking or anfwering fuch a queftion, as no one has any bufinefs to inquire, or right to know, what are their inward exercifes; every one ought to keep thefe to himfelf, &c. Others will inveigh againft Chriftians *telling their experiences*, as it is called, and infift it is nothing but mere enthufiafm. All thefe may be juftly confidered as having no good reafon for hoping themfelves to be Chriftians.

There are others who are forward enough, and even too forward, to tell of their religious experiences, and give a narrative of their converfion, which they feem to think to be extraordinary and excellent. And they do it when there does not appear any particular call to do it. They appear to be proud of their religious experiences, and often fpeak of them in a light and oftentatious manner, directly contrary to meeknefs and fear. Thefe are fo far from obeying the Apoftle's direction, that they abufe and pervert it, and do not appear to be real Chriftians.

II. It hence appears how reafonable and important it is that Chriftians fhould give the reafon of their hope, when they join to a church, and make a Chriftian profeffion; and that they fhould be afked concerning their doctrinal knowledge, and experience of the power of divine truths on their hearts. Churches have a right to know of fuch the reafon of their hope, and with what views,

views, exercises and motives they desire to join them. And by this means they get acquainted with them as they could not in any other way, and a foundation is laid for future intimacy and Christian communion. They therefore must be blameable, and give reason to fear they are not Christians, who refuse to join a church be cause they cannot be admitted unless they will give the reason of their hope, as above explained. And those churches are guilty of great and criminal neglect who admit members without any examination of them respecting their doctrinal and experimental knowledge of religion, or asking them to give the reason of their hope. The consequence generally is, that the members of such churches have no particular intimacy or acquaintance with each other, not so much as they have with the men of the world, or those who make no profession of religion; and know little or nothing of each other, and are in no respect distinguished from non-professors, but merely by having made a profession, and meeting together at the Lord's table.

III. This subject is suited to awaken Christians to a concern to be ready, and more ready than Christians in general have been and are, to give an answer to those who ask them the reason of the hope that is in them. They ought to strive to be yet better able to offer the most clear and convincing evidence of the truth, authenticity and excellence of Christianity, and to increase in the strength and constancy of every Christian grace; that they may have increasing evidence in their own minds that their hope is well founded, and be able to give more satisfying and striking evidence to others that they are Christians indeed; and so shine as lights in the world, in the midst of a crooked and perverse nation.

Christians have no reason to be ashamed of their hope and the gospel, let who will speak against and ridicule it. It has and will stand the test of the most severe rational trial and examination. The more it is examined by unprejudiced reason, the brighter its truth and divine excellency shine; and it will stand and prevail, until the light of

of it ſhall fill the world, as the waters cover the ſea, and all the oppoſers of it ſhall be turned into everlaſting darkneſs. Wherefore let Chriſtians gird up the loins of their mind, be ſober, and hope to the end, for the grace which is to be brought unto them at the revelation of Jeſus Chriſt; and be always ready to give an anſwer to every man that aſketh them the reaſon of the hope that is in them, with meekneſs and fear.

There is a ſpecial reaſon for a careful, courageous practice of this apoſtolic direction, at this day, which is the time in which the ſixth vial is poured out, predicted Revelation ſixteenth chapter, when the ſpirits of devils are allowed to go forth to the inhabitants of the whole world, to gather them to the battle of the great day of God Almighty. Theſe evil ſpirits are now among us, and have great influence on the minds of men, in the uncommon, rapid ſpread of infidelity, and all manner of error and vice. Chriſtians therefore now have a loud and ſpecial call to watch and be ſober, to vindicate the truth, and honour Chriſt and his cauſe in all poſſible ways. Let them hear and obey the words of Chriſt, which he ſpake with particular reference to this time: "Behold, I come as a thief. Bleſſed is he that watcheth and keepeth his garments, leſt he walk naked, and they ſee his ſhame."

SERMON

# Sermon III.

WRITTEN IN THE YEAR 1767.

On Chriſtian Friendſhip, as it ſubſiſts between Chriſt and Believers, and between Believers themſelves.

Cant. v. 16. This *is my beloved, and* this *is my friend.*

FRIENDSHIP affords the higheſt and moſt ſweet enjoyment that is to be had in this life, or that rational creatures are capable of. Yea, it is in ſome ſenſe the *only* ſource of real enjoyment and happineſs; ſo that to be perfectly without this, in every kind and degree of it, is to be wholly deſtitute of all true enjoyment and comfort. This gives pleaſure and ſweetneſs to all other enjoyments, and without this they all fade, and become inſipid and worthleſs; yea, every thing will be rather a burden, and worſe than nothing: whereas, this will give a degree of enjoyment and pleaſure, when ſtripped of every other good; ſo that he who is in circumſtances to exerciſe and enjoy friendſhip is in a degree happy, let his ſituation and condition otherwiſe be what it may: and it is impoſſible he ſhould be perfectly miſerable, ſo long as he is within reach of this ſweet, this heaven-born cordial.

It is probable that the moſt voluptuous ſenſualiſt that lives would in a great meaſure loſe his high reliſh for the pleaſures he is ſo eagerly purſuing, and all his ſweets would be turned into bitterneſs, if he ſhould feel himſelf perfectly, and in every ſenſe, friendleſs: for none can be found, however ſunk and ſordid their minds have become by vice, who have no ſort of taſte for friendſhip; though it may be, on the whole, a very corrupt taſte. To be ſure, if any ſuch may be found, they ſeem to be ſunk, in this reſpect, below the brutal creation; for it is obſerved that among them there is an appearance of love of

of ſociety, and at leaſt a reſemblance of love and friendſhip.

However loſt to all true friendſhip mankind in general are, yet a deſire of the eſteem and love of others is found in every breaſt, and is as eſſential to man as a deſire of happineſs; and therefore cannot be rooted out, but by deſtroying his natural powers, by which he will ceaſe to be man.

Hence it is that no inconſiderable part of the future miſery of the wicked will conſiſt in feeling themſelves perfectly friendleſs, and the objects of the hatred and contempt of all intelligent exiſtence in the univerſe, while they find themſelves in every reſpect in the moſt wretched, deplorable circumſtances, and have a moſt keen averſion to being hated and contemned, and a ſtrong deſire of the love and eſteem of others.

As real or diſintereſted benevolence is eſſential to true friendſhip, we have reaſon to think there are but few inſtances of it in this degenerate, ſelfiſh world; and where it does take place in any degree, it is in a very low and imperfect one; ſo that what many in all ages have been convinced of and aſſerted from long experience, may be relied upon as a certain truth, that this is a *friendleſs* world. However, there is a ſort of friendſhip, which is at bottom a merely ſelfiſh thing, being founded only in ſelf-love, or which is the reſult of what may be called *inſtinct*, or natural affection; which is very common, and in many inſtances riſes very high, and anſwers many valuable purpoſes to mankind in this preſent ſtate, it being many ways of great ſervice to mankind, as it prevents many evils that would otherwiſe take place, and promotes the good of ſociety, and often gives a degree of pleaſure and enjoyment. But, ſo far as true virtue or holineſs takes place, a foundation is laid for a different kind of friendſhip, which is immenſely higher, more noble and excellent, and conſiſts in exerciſes and enjoyments which ſurpaſs thoſe of all other friendſhips, more than the exerciſes and enjoyments of improved reaſon

reaſon excel thoſe of a brute, or the brightneſs of the meridian ſun, that of the meaneſt glow-worm.

And God has, in his adorable wiſdom and goodneſs, contrived and provided that this friendſhip ſhould be exerciſed and enjoyed in the higheſt perfection, being raiſed to the greateſt poſſible heights, attended with the beſt and moſt advantageous circumſtances.

The ſcripture leads us to conceive of the Deity as enjoying infinitely the moſt exalted and glorious friendſhip and ſociety in himſelf, for which there is a foundation in the incomprehenſible manner of his ſubſiſtence in the three perſons of the adorable Trinity. Here eternal love and friendſhip takes place and flouriſhes to an infinite degree, in an infinitely the moſt perfect and glorious ſociety, the ELOHIM, the Father, Son and Holy Ghoſt. And the ſociety and friendſhip for which men are formed by holineſs, without which they cannot be perfectly happy, may be conſidered as an imitation and image of of this, by which they are made in the likeneſs of God, and partake with him in the ſame kind of happineſs, which he enjoys to an infinite degree. And, in order that men might partake with him in the exerciſe and enjoyment of love and friendſhip to the higheſt degree and the greateſt advantage, God has not only laid a plan to promote and effect the higheſt and moſt perfect love and friendſhip towards each other in the moſt exalted and happy ſociety forever; but has ſo contrived, that they ſhall be brought into the neareſt and moſt intimate union and friendly intercourſe with himſelf, by which they ſhall in ſome ſenſe, yea, to a great degree, be united to the Eternal and moſt Glorious, divine Society, and partake of the ſame river of enjoyment and pleaſure, which proceeds from the throne of God and the Lamb, in a peculiar and eminent ſenſe.

To effect this in the beſt manner and to the greateſt advantage, the inviſible God, who eternally dwelt in the high and holy place, infinitely beyond the comprehenſion and reach of a creature, muſt come down, and make himſelf viſible, that he might be the head, the life and

ſoul of a viſible and moſt glorious ſociety. This has been done in the incarnation of the Son of God, by which the greateſt purpoſes of God's moral kingdom are anſwered in the higheſt poſſible degree, and all happy intelligences, eſpecially the redeemed from among men, are brought into a near union with God, and are under ſpecial advantages to receive communications from him, and enjoy his love and friendſhip in a manner and degree which could not have been in any other way. This is the mutual love and friendſhip ſpoken of in the text, which takes place between the incarnate Son of God, the divine Redeemer of loſt men, and his church or ſpouſe, or every one of the redeemed.

He is in a peculiar and diſtinguiſhed ſenſe the friend of the redeemed; and he is the beloved of their ſoul in a ſenſe and degree in which no other perſon is, or can be: and hence there is a mutual love and friendſhip between them, which is beyond compariſon the moſt intimate, intenſe, ſweet and exalted of any thing of the kind between any other friends and lovers, unſpeakably ſurpaſſing all other friendſhips in nature and degree, attended with the higheſt, moſt noble, tranſporting, ſoul-raviſhing enjoyment and delight, that can poſſibly exiſt, or be conceived of.

This union of hearts, this mutual love and friendſhip between Chriſt the Redeemer and Saviour, and believers in him, or the redeemed, is repreſented in ſcripture by the inclination and affection between the two ſexes of which mankind conſiſt, under the influence of which they mutually ſeek and come into a peculiar union and intimacy with each other, in which they may enjoy each other, and be happy in the exerciſe of mutual love and friendſhip. It is repreſented by the ſweet love and affection between the bridegroom and his bride, and the mutual love and friendſhip, and ſolemn engagements, by which the huſband and his ſpouſe are united, and become one, and are happy in each other. And this ſimilitude is, beyond doubt, moſt wiſely and properly choſen, by which to repreſent this ſpiritual union and

and friendſhip, as it is in many reſpects the moſt lively, ſtriking emblem and image of it that can be found in all nature; and is eſpecially calculated to give men the beſt and moſt clear idea of it, and to give and keep up in their minds a conviction and ſenſe of the reality, nature and happineſs of ſuch a union, love and friendſhip.

This ſeems to be the deſign of this ſong from which the words of the text are taken. It is indeed a *Love-ſong*, in which the higheſt, moſt noble, pure and honourable love and friendſhip between Chriſt and his people is repreſented and celebrated under the ſimilitude of two lovers whoſe hearts are united in the ſtrongeſt, the moſt pure and ſweeteſt love of eſteem, benevolence and complacency, in the exerciſe of which they deſire and ſeek the enjoyment of each other in the neareſt union and greateſt intimacy, in the near relation of huſband and ſpouſe. This is therefore called *The Song of Songs*, i. e. the moſt excellent ſong, eſpecially the beſt and moſt excellent of all the ſongs of Solomon, which we are told were *a thouſand and five*, as the theme, the ſubject and matter of it, is by far the moſt important, entertaining, excellent and ſublime; in order to which Solomon was divinely inſpired.

As the virtuous, pious and pure love between a man and his ſpouſe is in many reſpects the moſt lively and inſtructive image of the union and love between Chriſt and his church, God, in his wiſdom and goodneſs, ſaw fit to give ſuch a repreſentation of it in a divine ſong, as what was greatly needed, and would be exceeding uſeful to his church and people. And though the carnal and inattentive, or thoſe who are ſtrangers to this divine love and friendſhip, may call it all fooliſhneſs, and in their boaſted wiſdom deſpiſe and ridicule it, or improve it only to carnal, low and obſcene purpoſes; yet the children of true wiſdom will juſtify the wiſdom of God herein, and adore his goodneſs, while they find themſelves inſtructed, quickened and edified hereby. And every true, chaſte virgin who is eſpouſed to Chriſt

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as the beſt friend and ſpiritual huſband, will attend to it, and meditate upon it, with a peculiar reliſh, and ſweet and holy delight, which unſpeakably ſurpaſſes every thing the unholy ſoul can enjoy, or even imagine.

The words of the text are the concluſion of the anſwer to a queſtion put to the ſpouſe, viz. *What is thy beloved, more than another beloved?* She readily anſwers, by giving a particular deſcription of his charming beauties and ſuperlative excellence, by which he is diſtinguiſhed from all others, the chief among ten thouſands; and then ſums up all in one word, by ſaying, *He is altogether lovely.* He has the higheſt beauty, excellence and perfection, and has nothing elſe. Having thus given his character, ſhe ſays, with reference to the queſtion, *This is my beloved, and this is my friend. This* is the perſon, *this* is the character, with which I am ſo deeply in love; I am not aſhamed to own him to be the beloved of my ſoul. And this is my beſt friend, whoſe heart is ſet on me, and he loves me as much as I can deſire.

The mutual love and friendſhip between Chriſt and the believer, you will obſerve, is expreſſed here. The true Chriſtian has ſet his love on Chriſt; he is his beloved; he has given his heart to him, as to one who is the chief among ten thouſands, and altogether lovely. And Chriſt loves him moſt tenderly, in the character of a true, faithful and all-ſufficient friend and patron, and ſo returns love for love.

The words do then lead us to attend to Chriſt, as he is here pointed out, in the character of the beloved friend of his people, the redeemed from among men.

It may be ſaid in general, that Chriſt, the glorious head and huſband of his church, has every thing in him that can poſſibly come into the character of the beſt friend, and that to an inconceivable and infinite degree; and there is nothing belongs to him but what ſerves to complete and perfect this character; yea, he is at an infinite diſtance from every thing elſe. And his relation to his people, and all his conduct towards them, are ſuch, and ſuch are all the circumſtances of this friendſhip,

ſhip, as to conſpire to make it the moſt ſweet, raviſhing, noble and exalted that in the nature of things can be; and render him in the higheſt poſſible degree a deſirable, worthy and excellent friend.

But, for the better illuſtration of this point, the following particulars may be attended to.

1. He is the moſt able friend, even an omnipotent and all-ſufficient one. He can do whatever he pleaſes. He has a ſufficiency of power and wiſdom in all poſſible caſes, and is perfectly able to do for his friends, who love and truſt in him, whatever they need, or can poſſibly want to have done. All other friends are deficient in this reſpect: though they may have ſome ſufficiency and ability to do ſome things for us, yet it is but infinitely little they can do, compared with what we want to have done. We are infinitely needy; and muſt be eternally moſt miſerable and wretched, unleſs we have ſome friend to help us, who is fully able to go through with the work, and do all we want to have done, even in the moſt extreme, and, without ſuch a friend, a deſperate caſe. Now Chriſt is ſuch a friend. He is underſtanding and wiſe, perfectly to know what our caſe is, and what we want, and what is the wiſeſt and beſt way to afford relief, and ſupply all our wants; and he has full power to do whatever his wiſdom dictates. And in this reſpect he is diſtinguiſhed from all other perſons in the univerſe; none but he was able to befriend us in the caſe in which we are. This will more fully appear, before we have done.

2. He has the heart of a friend in all reſpects, and to the moſt perfect degree; or, he is willing and fully engaged to do all he can do for his people; all they can poſſibly want to have done in any caſe, and at any time. All other friends fail here. Though they are able to do but little for their friends comparatively, yet they have not goodneſs enough to do all they can, in all caſes, and at all times. They have not the heart of a friend to perfection; ſo are not friendly to the utmoſt of their power at all times, but may be very unfriendly in ſome inſtances;

inſtances; therefore cannot be relied upon without caution, and danger of being diſappointed. But Chriſt has the heart of a friend to infinite perfection, ſo that he can be relied upon in all caſes, without any limits or danger. His benevolence to his people is without any bounds, and ſufficient to ſurmount the greateſt difficulties in the way of their good, and prompt him to do things infinitely great for them, and beſtow on them the beſt and the greateſt good, however unworthy and ill-deſerving they are, and however criminal and vile their conduct has been towards him, in the moſt aggravated and horrid abuſe of his goodneſs.

3. He is a friend on whom we are dependent, and to whom we are indebted and beholden in the higheſt poſſible degree. This gives great advantage to love and friendſhip, where the friends and lovers are not equal, but one ſuperior to the other, and the other's benefactor and ſaviour to ſuch a degree as to lay his friend under the greateſt obligations to love and gratitude. And the greater this dependence is, and the more one friend has received from, and is indebted to another, in this way, the more ſweet and happy is the love and friendſhip between them. It is indeed contrary to pride, and an heart that is not formed for true friendſhip, to be thus united to ſuch a ſuperior as a friend, and to be thus dependent upon, and wholly indebted and beholden to him for every thing; but it is not ſo, but directly the contrary, with the truly humble ſinner: that friend will be moſt agreeable to ſuch an one on whom he is moſt dependent, and to whom he is in the higheſt degree obliged; and we cannot form an idea of any other two friends ſo happy as theſe, when this is the caſe to the higheſt poſſible degree, or conceive of any friendſhip ſo great, advantageous and ſweet as this. It ſeems indeed to belong to the nature of true creature friendſhip, even to deſire and delight in this circumſtance, viz. to be greatly indebted and beholden to the friend we eſteem and love: the greater obligations we are under to him, the better pleaſed we are, and the more

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ſweet is the love and friendſhip. This ſeems to be owing to two things eſpecially; one is, that hereby we have a clear and ſtriking evidence of our friend's love to us; which muſt give ſweetneſs and enjoyment in proportion to our love to him. The other is, that hereby we are led to feel and exerciſe a love of gratitude, which is peculiarly ſweet, in proportion to the love of eſteem, benevolence and complacency we have for our friend. In this view, the more we are obliged, the better; and the greater ſatisfaction and ſweetneſs we have in the friendſhip. And on the other hand, the more the other has done for the obliged friend, and the greater benefactor he has been to him, the higher enjoyment and happineſs he has, in proportion to his benevolence and love to him.

Hence it is, that where perſons have undertaken to repreſent the higheſt and moſt affecting inſtances of true love and friendſhip, and the greateſt degree of enjoyment and happineſs in ſuch friendſhip, and exhibit this to the beſt advantage in a feigned ſtory or romance, they have formed a hiſtory of ſome one of a high and excellent character, and of a generous, benevolent ſpirit, ſetting his heart on one in a mean, low and miſerable ſtate and circumſtances, to be his ſpouſe. She is, for inſtance, taken captive by her enemies, and reduced to the greateſt poverty and diſtreſs, and her life eminently expoſed. He, in order to redeem and deliver her, and procure her for his bride and ſpouſe, goes through a long ſeries of ſelf-denial and ſufferings; is at great expenſe, and does great exploits, and expoſes his life to an eminent degree, without which ſhe muſt have periſhed in the hands of her cruel foes. And thus he delivers her, by riſking all that is dear to him in her behalf, and, in a ſenſe, giving his own life for her; ſo that ſhe entirely owes her life, and all ſhe has, to him, and is under the greateſt imaginable obligations to him. In this way he procures her for his ſpouſe, and brings her into the neareſt union to himſelf, and a foundation is laid for the greateſt happineſs in each other,

other, in the enjoyment of the moſt ſweet love and friendſhip; every way to an unſpeakably greater degree than could have been in different circumſtances, or in any other way, in which ſhe would not have been ſo much dependent upon, and ſo greatly obliged to him.

This is but a faint ſhadow of the caſe before us, with reſpect to Chriſt, the friend and bridegroom of his church and people. They are fallen into an infinitely calamitous and evil ſtate; a ſtate of complete, total and eternal deſtruction; into the hands of the devil, their great and potent enemy, and under the diſpleaſure and curſe of the God that made them: being infinitely guilty and ill deſerving, the priſoners of juſtice, bound over to ſuffer his eternal wrath; not being able or diſpoſed to help and deliver themſelves in the leaſt degree. The Son of God was the only perſon in the univerſe that was able to redeem and ſave them; and he was not under the leaſt obligation to do it. But he voluntarily offered himſelf, and undertook this moſt difficult, coſtly and mighty work; and that from pure love and benevolence to theſe loſt and infinitely miſerable creatures, and a deſire to procure and preſent to himſelf a glorious church, a bride, not having ſpot or wrinkle, or any ſuch thing, but perfectly beautiful and holy, and without blemiſh, being brought into the neareſt and everlaſting union and friendſhip with himſelf.

In order to this, he *gave himſelf* for them. Though he was a perſon of infinite dignity, riches and worth, he became poor, and humbled himſelf ſo as to become a ſervant, and ſubjected himſelf to the greateſt ignominy and ſufferings, even unto death. He voluntarily put himſelf into the place and circumſtances of his ſpouſe, and when her whole intereſt lay at ſtake, and ſhe was in a ſtate of complete deſtruction, he took the whole of her deſtruction and ſufferings on himſelf, and went through with the matter: he drank the whole of the bitter cup, that ſhe might eſcape; he gave his life for her ranſom, and ſpilt his own blood in the moſt trying circumſtances, that he might completely redeem her

her from the jaws of the moſt dreadful and eternal deſtruction, and deliver her from the hand and power of all her enemies. He has ſurvived the dreadful ſcene, having completed the greateſt and moſt difficult work that ever was, or ever will or can be undertaken, and yet lives to eſpouſe the cauſe of his people; and will not ſtop till he has completed the matter, and ſanctified and cleanſed every one of them with the waſhing of water by the word, and brought them into the moſt near, and an everlaſting union and friendſhip with himſelf, in the moſt perfect enjoyment of his love, riches, honours and happineſs forever and ever.

Thus the redeemed have a Friend, not only in himſelf moſt excellent and worthy, and full of the greateſt benevolence and goodneſs, but one on whom they are in the higheſt degree dependent, and to whom they are indebted and obliged in the higheſt imaginable or even poſſible degree, in a manner which is moſt pleaſing to them, and ſerves to render him unſpeakably more excellent and worthy in their eyes, and give a ſweetneſs to their love and friendſhip, which could not be known in any other circumſtances.

No other creatures in the univerſe have ſuch a friend as this. The angels have no ſuch friend. When ſome of them fell into ſin and wo, they had no friend to redeem them. And the redeemed from among men have had infinitely more done for them, and they are infinitely more dependent on the Son of God for all good and happineſs, and indebted and obliged to him, than the angels are. They are the bride, the Lamb's wife, who are by him redeemed out of great tribulation, from a ſtate of infinite wo, in which they lay perfectly helpleſs; that he might enjoy them forever in a peculiar union and friendſhip, which exceeds every thing of this kind in all poſſible degrees. Theſe circumſtances lay a foundation for a ſweetneſs and enjoyment immenſely higher than could take place in any other way. In a ſenſe and acknowledgment of what Chriſt has done for them, and their peculiar dependence upon, and obliga-

tions to him, the redeemed will exercise a kind of humble, sweet and beautiful love towards their Friend and Redeemer, which is peculiar to them, and never could have had an existence in any other way but this; and which will be the eternal source of a most sweet and high enjoyment, which no stranger, none but the beloved bride, not even the angels, can intermeddle with or taste. In the exercise of this peculiarly sweet love and friendship towards their infinitely dear and glorious Friend and Redeemer, they will eternally sing a *new song*, which none but the redeemed, the bride, the Lamb's wife, can possibly sing or learn, to all eternity; no, not even the highest and best angel in heaven; saying, "Worthy is the Lamb to receive power, and riches, and wisdom, and strength, and honour, and glory; for thou wast slain, and hast redeemed us to God by thy blood, and hast made us kings and priests unto God." Well then may they now begin to say, with a heart-felt sweetness, and joy which is unspeakable and full of glory, "*This* is my beloved, and *this* is my FRIEND."

4. Jesus Christ is a friend who has exercised the highest degrees of love, and has given the greatest possible testimonies of it.

In order to true friendship there must be mutual love. This is essential to the character of our friend, that he loves us; and he acts in this character, and maintains friendship, by exercising love, and giving proper tokens and manifestations of it, on all occasions. Solomon observes, that "A friend loveth at all times." And he is the greatest friend, whose love is the strongest, and is exercised and manifested in the most difficult and trying circumstances.

Now Christ has distinguished himself from all others in this respect, and has discovered himself to be infinitely the greatest and best friend. This appears from what was said, under the last particular, of what Christ has done and suffered for his spouse; for in all this he exercised and expressed his love, and that in the most trying circumstances, and to the highest possible degree.

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One thing that recommends a friend, and adds to his worth and excellence, and makes him dear to his beloved, is, that he is a *tried* friend; he has perſevered in his friendſhip, and exerciſed and expreſſed his love in the moſt difficult caſe imaginable; in doing which he has been at the greateſt pains and coſt, while he had the greateſt temptations to give up his beloved. Jeſus Chriſt is ſuch a *tried* friend, and that to the greateſt poſſible degree.

"Greater love hath no man," ſays this greateſt and chief of all friends, "than this, that a man lay down his life for his friends." But Chriſt's love and friendſhip has infinitely exceeded this. He has done and ſuffered more for his people than merely dying for them, a thouſand times over. He drank the bitter cup for them, which was infinitely more than merely dying a violent death. He was made a curſe for them, and ſuffered a ſenſe of the wrath of God. This drank up his ſpirits: the foretaſte of it threw him into the moſt amazing agony: and this made him cry out, in inexpreſſible and moſt aſtoniſhing anguiſh, "My God, my God, why haſt thou forſaken me!" What is the moſt cruel death that ever martyr ſuffered, to this? The martyrs have been able to rejoice in the midſt of all the keeneſt tortures enemies could inflict. They have ſung in the flames, and found it the moſt happy, joyful hour they ever ſaw. And ſo might Chriſt have done on the croſs, had he but *their* ſupports, and no more to ſuffer than they. But what he ſuffered in his death was ſomething infinitely greater and more terrible. Under this infinite weight he hung on the croſs, and at laſt bowed his head and gave up the ghoſt. This was dying in a ſenſe and degree in which no other perſon ever did. To die thus was infinitely more, and greater, and more dreadful, than the death of all the ten thouſand martyrs who have fallen a ſacrifice to the cruelty of their bloody perſecutors. Yea, it was as great a thing and equivalent to the eternal death and deſtruction which the redeemed deſerve, and were expoſed to: for he died

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in their ſtead; he took their death and eternal deſtruction on himſelf. On him it fell in its full weight, and he bore and went through it all. He knew what it would coſt him to eſpouſe the cauſe of ſinners; yet he voluntarily undertook, put himſelf in their circumſtances (ſin only excepted) and went through with it, without flinching in the leaſt degree. Here is an inſtance of love and friendſhip, to which there neither is, nor can be, any parallel in the univerſe. This is the evidence and token of love which Chriſt has given to his people; which is infinitely the greateſt that ever was, or can be.

Beſides, the love of Chriſt to his people will appear yet greater, if we conſider their native character and diſpoſition towards him. He loved them, and died for them, when they were not only mean, worthleſs, unworthy and infinitely guilty, but *his enemies*, diſpoſed to hate, deſpiſe and oppoſe him, in his whole character and in all his ways; and even in his moſt aſtoniſhing works of love and kindneſs to them. Herein he has commended his love to us, in that, when we were his great and inexcuſable enemies, he died for us. It is a much higher exerciſe of love, and a greater teſtimony of it, to love and die for an enemy, a baſe, odious injurious creature, than it would be to do this for an excellent, benevolent and much eſteemed friend.

What higher evidence and teſtimony could Chriſt give of his love of benevolence, to thoſe whom he redeems, than this! And what higher act of love and friendſhip can there be! Surely his love to his people cannot be doubted of. And if he thus loved them when they were his vile enemies, he will continue to love them now they are reconciled, and have choſen him for their beſt friend and patron. And this is an exerciſe and evidence of a ſtrong and wonderful love, that will unſpeakably endear him to them, and add an inexpreſſible ſweetneſs to this friendſhip forever.

And, as the effect and further evidence of this love, he gives them his Holy Spirit to change their hearts, deliver them from the dominion of ſin, and the ſlave-

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ry to Satan, in which they naturally are, and implant laſting principles of holineſs and love to him, by which their hearts are purified, and unite themſelves to him, with the moſt perfect bond and union of love and friendſhip. This is another pledge of his great, everlaſting and unchangeable love to them. And the ſaints in this world, ſo far as they have the evidence that they are the ſubjects of ſuch a work of grace, may well rejoice, and with unſpeakably ſweet delight give praiſe "unto him that has loved them, and waſhed them from their ſins in his own blood." What wonderful, ſovereign love and grace is this, which overtakes and falls upon the guilty, ſinful wretch, while in his full career to hell, running on in the moſt daring, mad oppoſition to Chriſt, and contempt of him, without the leaſt diſpoſition to hearken to the voice of wiſdom, and turn at his reproof! Every true Chriſtian aſcribes all this to Chriſt, and is ſo affected with his preventing, ſovereign love and grace, herein exerciſed and manifeſted, as to taſte an unſpeakable ſweetneſs in it. With what ſweet delight does he often ſay, "If I have the leaſt degree of love to Chriſt, and a heart to know, ſubmit to and truſt in him, this is the effect of his eternal preventing, ſovereign love and grace, which alone has made the difference between me and thoſe who run on in their mad courſe to hell! Not unto me, not unto me, but to thy wonderful, diſtinguiſhing love and grace, be all the glory!"

It may be alſo obſerved here, that Chriſt has given them his Spirit, by which they are ſealed to the day of redemption, and as the pledge and earneſt of their eternal inheritance, ſo a pledge and token of his unchangeable, everlaſting love to them. He has indeed given himſelf, and all things, to them; he has made them heirs of the whole univerſe. He has made and is doing all things for their ſakes. He ſays to his church of redeemed ones, "I am the Lord thy God, the Holy One of Iſrael, thy Saviour; I gave Egypt for thy ranſom, Ethiopia and Seba for thee. Since thou waſt pre-

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cious in my ſight, thou haſt been honourable, and I have loved thee: therefore will I give men for thee, and people for thy life." (Iſa. xliii. 3, 4.) Surely Chriſt ſhews the greateſt love imaginable to his people, ſince he gives them all he has to give, and withholds *no one good thing* from them. Now the more love he has to his people, and the higher and more clear evidence he gives of it, ſo much the more excellent and valuable friend he is to them; and their happineſs in him as a friend will be in proportion to this. How infinitely diſtinguiſhed, in this reſpect, is Chriſt from all other friends! Well may the Chriſtian ſay, "*This* is my beloved, and *this* is MY FRIEND.

## Sermon IV.

The ſame Subject continued.

Cant. v. 16. This *is my beloved, and* this *is my friend.*

5. JESUS CHRIST, the Chriſtian's friend, is a perſon of infinite dignity, worth and excellence. He has all this to the higheſt poſſible perfection and extent, ſo that no imagination can poſſibly exceed it. This his true dignity, worth and excellence, in himſelf conſidered, infinitely heightens his character and worth as a friend, and lays a foundation for the moſt ſweet, exalted and growing happineſs in his love and friendſhip to all eternity. He who has no true worth and excellence cannot be juſtly valued and delighted in at all, as a friend, and there is no foundation for a happy friendſhip with ſuch an one. Worth and excellence therefore comes into the eſſence of the character of a friend: and the more any one has of this, the more is he to be prized as a friend, and the greater happineſs is to be enjoyed in his love, and

and friendſhip. A friend gives himſelf to his beloved; ſo that the more dignity, worth and excellence he has, the more he gives to the perſon he admits into union and friendſhip with him. Therefore the more worth and excellence any perſon has, the more we naturally, and juſtly, prize his love and friendſhip, and the more ſweetneſs and pleaſure we have in it. We prize and delight in the love of another in proportion to our eſteem of him, and the ſenſe we have of his true excellence, dignity and worthineſs. How much better is it to us to be the objects of the love of ſome dignified perſonage, who appears to us to have all the excellence and attracting charms of human nature, and to have him our friend, than to have the love and friendſhip of one who is in our eyes abſolutely worthleſs and contemptible! I need not therefore, yea, I cannot, ſay of how much advantage the dignity and excellence of Chriſt is in this friendſhip, in this view. The higher the Chriſtian riſes in his eſteem of Chriſt, the more he ſees of his dignity and excellence, the more pleaſed and delighted he will neceſſarily be in being the object of his embraces and love. Surely then he had rather in this view be beloved by Chriſt than by all the world beſides; and nothing can fill his breaſt with ſuch overflowing delight as to be able to ſay, This is my beloved, and this is my friend. And this lays a foundation for eſteem and complacency, without which there can be no happy friendſhip; and the higher this riſes, the more happineſs and enjoyment there is in a friend. Chriſt in this reſpect is diſtinguiſhed from all other perſons in the univerſe, as the beſt friend, in union and love to whom there may be the higheſt happineſs. We are in ourſelves ſo mean and low, and of ſuch little worth, that we cannot enjoy friendſhip to the beſt advantage with thoſe who are our equals. The more dignified and excellent our friend is, and the more diſtinguiſhed he is from us, and the more above us, in this reſpect, the more happy ſhall we neceſſarily be in his love and friendſhip. In Chriſt therefore believers have all that can

can be desired in a friend, in this respect. In him they have an inexhaustible fund for high and growing enjoyment; and, in a sense of his dignity and excellence, their ravished hearts will swell with extatic delight, while they feel and say, "*This* is my beloved, and *this* is MY FRIEND."

6. Jesus Christ is the most condescending, familiar friend.

Where there is a great imparity in two friends, the one very high, honourable and worthy, and the other mean and low, it is inconsistent with the most sweet and happy friendship, unless he who is dignified and exalted, and is every way so much superior to the other, knows how, and is disposed, to exercise condescension equal to his true dignity and worth, so as to practise as great familiarity and intimacy with his friend who is so much beneath him, as if he were his equal. But where this is the case, the great superiority of one to the other gives a great advantage to the friendship, and renders it more sweet and happy to the inferior; so that the more worthy and exalted his friend is, the higher enjoyment he has in the friendship. This imparity in station and dignity is commonly in the way of the enjoyment of true friendship among men in this world; because the great and exalted know not how to condescend and stoop to the mean and low, in a manner and degree that is in such a case necessary, but are disposed to keep themselves at a distance.

But Christ is in this respect the most excellent friend; for his condescension and humility are equal to his high exaltation and dignity; and he admits his friends, however mean, unworthy and despicable they are in themselves, to as great familiarity and intimacy, as if he were but their equal; so that his superiority and dignity give great advantage to the friendship, in this respect.

And here it is of importance to observe, that his *incarnation*, or union to the human nature, by which he is a real man, even *Immanuel*, God with us, is of infinite advantage

advantage with reſpect to this. God is infinitely the beſt friend; but it is impoſſible he ſhould communicate himſelf to creatures, and become their condeſcending, familiar friend, in any other way, ſo well, and to ſo great advantage, as by uniting himſelf to their nature, ſo as to become one of them. In this view, as well as on many other accounts, the incarnation of the Son of God is a moſt wiſe and gracious contrivance, as it is adapted in the higheſt poſſible degree to promote the happineſs of creatures, eſpecially of the redeemed, in the love and enjoyment of God. God hereby comes down to creatures in a way and manner ſuited to their nature and capacity, and diſcovers and communicates himſelf to them to the greateſt poſſible advantage; and there is a foundation laid for that condeſcenſion to men, and intimate love and friendly familiarity between Chriſt and his people, which could not have been in any other way. The Moſt High God is become a man, a moſt meek, humble, condeſcending man, able and diſpoſed to take his people into the moſt intimate union and familiarity; while this man has all the dignity and honour of divinity. Thus the man Chriſt Jeſus will eternally be the medium of a kind and degree of communication of the Deity to creatures, which could be in no other way, and which is every way adapted to raiſe them up and make them happy: and the redeemed have a moſt condeſcending, intimate friend in the perſon of Chriſt, who is both God and man, who cannot be equalled by any other perſon in the univerſe; and in union and friendſhip with whom, they have the higheſt enjoyment and happineſs.

The condeſcenſion of Chriſt, as a moſt tender, intimate and familiar friend, is truly wonderful, and has not, nor ever will have, any parallel in the univerſe. This he practiſed in a manner and degree truly aſtoniſhing, towards his friends and diſciples, when he was on earth. He condeſcended to their weakneſs, and adapted himſelf in his inſtructions to their low, childiſh way of conceiving of things, and meekly bore with their ſtu-

pidity and unteachable perverſeneſs. He dwelt with them night and day, and admitted them to embrace and kiſs him from time to time. We may look on this as an image and ſpecimen of the condeſcenſion and familiarity with which he treats his people at all times. Though he is now exalted in the higheſt heavens, and has taken the throne of the univerſe, and rules over all, angels and authorities and powers being made ſubject unto him; yet this has not lifted him up in any degree, ſo as to diſpoſe him to keep at a greater diſtance from his people; but he practiſes as much condeſcenſion towards the meaneſt of them, and receives them to as great a nearneſs and familiarity, as ever he did in his ſtate of humiliation. His condeſcenſion and goodneſs in this reſpect infinitely exceeds that of any other friend, and is equal to his exaltation, greatneſs and dignity. In this he excels all other friends, as much as he does in honour and dignity.

No other friend is ſo eaſy of acceſs as he: his friends are welcome to him at all times; yea, he is always preſent with them, ſo that they may converſe with him whenever they pleaſe, in the moſt intimate, familiar manner, without keeping the leaſt diſtance, and without any reſerve. He is all attention to them whenever they turn their thoughts with their hearts towards him, and nothing can divert him from converſing with them, or interrupt the correſpondence, but their withdrawing themſelves, or turning away from him. He is ready to meet them and attend upon them at what time and place they pleaſe; yea, he calls after them, and invites them to look towards him, and ſpeak to him. He ſays to each one of his friends, "Let me ſee thy countenance, let me hear thy voice; for ſweet is thy voice, and thy countenance is comely." Behold, he ſtands at the door of every one, and knocks, and whoever opens to him, he comes in and ſups with them, and they with him.

And here it is worthy of ſpecial remark, that their meanneſs, unworthineſs, and paſt ill treatment of him, is not in the leaſt in the way of this his condeſcending goodneſs

goodneſs and kindneſs. He has no diſpoſition to retaliate for their folly and ingratitude, and keep them at a diſtance for this: he is as condeſcending and kind to the meaneſt and moſt unworthy and guilty, as to any whatſoever. And while he thus condeſcends, and is good and kind to them in the moſt liberal manner, he does not upbraid them for their paſt follies, or becauſe they are ſo much beholden to him. He gives moſt bountifully, and with the greateſt liberality, and upbraideth not.

And he is not, nor ever will be, aſhamed of any of his people who have united themſelves to him as their choſen friend, however mean and deſpicable in themſelves; but he will appear as their friend, at all times, and in the moſt public manner, and own them to be his friends, and confeſs their names before his Father, and before his angels. Yea, he is ſo far from being aſhamed of them, that he looks on them as an honour to him. They are unto him "a crown of glory, and a royal diadem," in the hand of this their condeſcending friend: they are unto him "for a name and for a praiſe and for a glory," as the bride is the ornament and glory of her huſband. Such a friend as this has every true Chriſtian, in which he is infinitely diſtinguiſhed from all other friends; who is moſt exactly ſuited to the circumſtances of the redeemed from among men, and to raiſe their happineſs in friendſhip with him to the higheſt key.—— But I have yet many other things to ſay of this moſt excellent and bleſſed Friend.

7. By all his condeſcenſion, love and kindneſs towards ſinners, and entering into the neareſt and deareſt friendſhip with them, he does not degrade himſelf in the leaſt, nor loſe any degree of his true dignity, worth and excellence; but has greatly honoured himſelf hereby.

This is a very important and eſſential article in this friendſhip; for if this were not true, it would be a very unhappy union, and no good could come of it, either to Chriſt, or thoſe on whom he ſets his love. If this were a diſhonourable friendſhip on Chriſt's part, he would by this loſe his merit and worthineſs in the ſight of the Father;

Father; ſo could be of no avail to recommend the ſinner on whom he ſets his love, of which he ſtands in infinite need, and without which he cannot be happy in the favour of God; which will be more particularly conſidered under the next head.

The Jews attempted to reproach our Lord, and caſt an odium upon him, by ſaying that he was a friend of publicans and ſinners. If he had been ſo in the ſenſe they meant, it would have been indeed a reproach and diſgrace to him. If he had been their friend in a ſenſe which did imply the leaſt degree of love and approbation of their character as ſinners, and if he had eſpouſed their cauſe in this view, and under the leaſt influence of this, he would ſo far degrade himſelf, and render himſelf and his love worthleſs, odious and deſpicable in the ſight of all holy, worthy beings. This therefore would have wholly ſpoilt his character as the Almighty Friend and Redeemer of ſinners. But Jeſus Chriſt is infinitely far from this. Though he is the friend of ſinners, has eſpouſed their cauſe, and befriended them as no other perſon ever did or could; yet he has not hereby appeared in the leaſt degree a friend to ſin, but the contrary to an infinite degree. He has befriended ſinners conſiſtent with the moſt perfect and even infinite hatred of ſin, and ſo of their character as ſinners, and ſo as to manifeſt his hatred and abhorrence of them to the higheſt poſſible degree. In his higheſt act of love and friendſhip to ſinners, he did in the higheſt poſſible degree, and in the moſt public, convincing, ſtriking manner, juſtify the Divine Character and law which the ſinner had oppoſed and contemned, and condemn the ſinner. The higheſt angel in heaven cannot conceive to this day, and never will to all eternity, how Chriſt could have condemned ſin more effectually, and ſet the ſinner in a worſe and more odious light, and ſhewed his love of holineſs and hatred of ſin more fully, than he did when he died on the croſs. In this he did in the higheſt poſſible degree juſtify God in threatening and curſing the ſinner, and being diſpoſed to puniſh him forever, while he voluntarily took that puniſhment on himſelf, that the ſinner might eſcape.

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In Chriſt then are united the greateſt friend to God and his law, and to the cauſe and intereſt of holineſs, that ever was known in the univerſe; and at the ſame time the greateſt friend of the ſinner. Theſe two ſeeming contraries are united in the ſame perſon and character, and expreſſed in the moſt perfect manner, and to the higheſt degree, in the ſame conduct. Therefore, when Chriſt ſtooped the loweſt, and condeſcended the moſt to befriend ſinners, he did in the higheſt degree and moſt effectual manner eſpouſe the cauſe of God in oppoſition to the ſinner, and appeared in his greateſt excellency, and was moſt worthy and meritorious, in God's ſight. How theſe two could be united in the ſame perſon and the ſame act, was far above the wiſdom of angels; and herein, in a ſpecial manner, is Chriſt the wiſdom of God.

Well may the Chriſtian boaſt and ſay, "*This* is my friend;" who is alſo the greateſt friend to the ſupreme Lawgiver of the univerſe, and has ſo become my friend, and ſtooped to eſpouſe my cauſe, and take me into the neareſt and deareſt relation to himſelf, as at the ſame time to maintain and expreſs his dignity, worthineſs and excellency, and merit infinitely in the ſight of the Father.——This leads to another particular.

8. Chriſt improves all his worth and excellence in the behalf and for the benefit of his people. It is all theirs, and improved to their advantage, in the beſt manner, and to the higheſt degree; ſo that it is in effect all given away to them, being moſt effectually, and to the beſt purpoſe, placed to their account.

Sinners want ſuch a friend; and no other perſon could befriend them to any purpoſe, to himſelf or to them, but one who is infinitely excellent and worthy. They being infinitely hateful, guilty and ill-deſerving in themſelves, and having nothing by which they can abate their ill-deſert, and render themſelves a whit the more deſerving and acceptable, on its own account, they muſt be eternally hated and curſed, unleſs they have ſomething to recommend them which is not in themſelves, but in

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ſome other: and this muſt be ſomething infinitely valuable and excellent, or it can in no meaſure or degree countervail their odiouſneſs and ill-deſert ſo as in the leaſt to recommend them to their offended Lawgiver and Sovereign. And it will not become him to forgive them and ſhow them any favour, unleſs they have ſomething to recommend them, and repair the diſhonour they have done him by violating his law, and deſpiſing his character and government. Therefore, unleſs ſome one did eſpouſe their cauſe and undertake for them, who has worthineſs and merit enough to reſtore the honour of God's broken law, and effectually recommend ſinners to their offended Sovereign by interpoſing his own worthineſs in their behalf, they muſt be the objects of his diſpleaſure and wrath forever, as what is moſt fit and right.

Now Chriſt is the only perſon in the univerſe who was able effectually to eſpouſe their cauſe in this reſpect, and act the part of a friend to them. He has worthineſs and merit enough in the eyes of the offended Deity, effectually to procure pardon and favour for the ſinner, if properly interpoſed in his behalf, ſo that it might be fit to reckon it to his account. And this Chriſt has done in the moſt fit and proper manner. He has put himſelf in the ſinner's ſtead, has borne the curſe he lay under, and paid the greateſt honours to the divine law and character; which is ſo pleaſing and acceptable to the Majeſty of Heaven, that he is ready to pardon and bleſs any one who is a friend to Chriſt, and truſts in his merit and worthineſs *alone* to recommend him.

Chriſt repeatedly ſpoke of this to his diſciples in the moſt expreſs manner, and told them that their love and union of heart to him did effectually recommend them to the Father, and intereſt them in his love and favour, to as great a degree as they needed, or could deſire. His words are, "He that hath my commandments, and keepeth them, he it is that loveth me: *and he that loveth me ſhall be loved of my Father.* If any man love me, he will keep my words; and my Father will love him,

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For the Father himſelf loveth you, *becauſe* ye have loved me, and have believed that I came out from God."

We cannot reaſonably ſuppoſe that Chriſt means to declare in theſe words that their love and friendſhip to him did, on its own account, or becauſe of the excellency and worth of it in itſelf conſidered, recommend them to the Father, and procure his love and favour to them, as a teſtimony of his well-pleaſedneſs with their perſons and love, conſidered as by themſelves, and ſeparate from Chriſt. We cannot underſtand our Saviour thus in theſe words; for this would ſet them in direct contradiction to the whole New Teſtament, which teaches us that ſinners are pardoned, and received to the favour and love of the Father, purely out of reſpect to Chriſt, to his righteouſneſs and worthineſs, which alone recommends them to him; and not any exerciſes and works of their own. But his meaning muſt be, that the Father is ſo well pleaſed with him, and loves him ſo well, conſidered in the capacity of mediator and a friend of ſinners, and his merit and worthineſs in this character is ſo great in his ſight, that he is ready to be well pleaſed with and love any ſinner who unites himſelf to him in true love and friendſhip, and truſts in him in this relation and character. Such love and union to this friend is a ſufficient ground and reaſon of the Father's loving him; and ſo the Father loves him, *becauſe* he loves and is united to his Son, who is infinitely honourable and worthy in his ſight, and is infinitely near and dear to him: and who has done and ſuffered ſo much in the behalf of the ſinner, that his merit and worth might be improved for his benefit, in which he has honoured the Father, and in the moſt excellent way and manner poſſible, and to the greateſt advantage, employed all the intereſt he has with the Father, to procure his love and favour to the ſinner who is thus united to him. The Father loves his Son ſo well, he is a perſon of ſuch infinite dignity and worthineſs, and has exerciſed ſuch an high degree of virtue, and has honoured him ſo much, in what he has done and ſuffered for ſinners,

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improving all his merit with the Father in their behalf; that nothing is wanting but the ſinner's loving him and truſting in him in this character, ſo uniting himſelf to him as his true friend, in order to the Father's loving him. The Father has ſuch love to his Son, and the Son ſtands in ſuch a relation to ſinners, that the ſinner who loves the Son is neceſſarily beloved by the Father, purely from the love he has to his Son, however odious, vile and unworthy he is in himſelf. And thus the Father loves them, becauſe they love his Son; and can do no otherwiſe, unleſs he ceaſes to love his Son; for the love he has to his Son will neceſſarily operate ſo, and induce him to love thoſe who love his Son, and to whom the Son is a friend, and acts as their friend before the Father, preſenting his merit, and all he has done and ſuffered for his honour, deſiring that this may be reckoned to them, and that they might have pardon and favour on his account. For the Father to withhold his love and favour from ſuch is really to withhold his love and favour from his Son; and therefore if he love the latter, he will love the former; and there is no other poſſible ſuppoſition in the reaſon and nature of things.

And this view of the matter (by the way) may lead all the attentive to ſee what is the true meaning and import of the doctrine of the imputation of the merit and righteouſneſs of Chriſt, for the pardon and juſtification of the ſinner, who believes in and cleaves to him in the character of a mediator; and how reaſonable it is, and exactly agreeable to the nature of things.

If we have a friend who loves us, and there is a mutual friendſhip between us and him, who we know has great favour and merit with one whom we have offended, and whoſe love and favour we want, and who is very dear to him, and greatly beloved by him; we are naturally, and with the greateſt reaſon, ready to truſt in ſuch a friend to procure for us the favour we want. And if the dignity and worthineſs of our friend is ſufficient, and his merit with the perſon we have offended is ſo great as to countervail our offence, and worthy of ſo great

great a favour as we want, and we know he is engaged to make the beſt uſe of his merit and worthineſs in the eyes of that perſon to procure of him this favour, having exerted himſelf in all poſſible ways in our behalf, and ſo as greatly to pleaſe and honour him; if we have ſuch a friend, we may be ſure of obtaining the favour we want, however unworthy we are, and how much ſoever we have offended this perſon, and though he has no diſpoſition to ſhew us the leaſt favour on our own account; but, conſidered as we are in ourſelves, and unconnected with our friend, is diſpoſed to hate, condemn and deſtroy us: and in proportion to our love to our friend, and ſenſe of his dignity and worthineſs, and of the high virtue and excellence of what he had done in our behalf, ſhall we have confidence of obtaining the favour we want, and with boldneſs approach the offended perſon in his name.

If a ſubject has incurred the juſt diſpleaſure of his prince, and greatly wants his pardon and favour; how happy does he count himſelf, if he has ſome great perſonage his friend, who is near the prince, and has great honour and favour with him! eſpecially if he knows this great and honourable perſonage is ready to improve all the intereſt and influence he has with the prince, in his behalf, and for this end has been at vaſt pains and expenſe to make good the damage the prince had ſuſtained by his crime, and render it honourable for him to grant the pardon, and beſtow the favour he wants. In ſuch a caſe we all know the criminal cannot fail of obtaining the pardon and favour he needs, if his friend at court has dignity, merit and worthineſs enough, in the eyes of the prince, to be worthy of ſuch a favour. The prince's love to this perſonage will naturally, and neceſſarily, flow out to the perſon whoſe friend he is, and who loves him. And in this caſe we ſee the merit and worthineſs of this great and excellent perſonage is imputed, or transferred to the account of the unworthy criminal, to recommend him to that favour, and procure it for him, of which he is moſt unworthy in himſelf,

ſelf, and which it would have been utterly unfit and indecent for the prince to beſtow upon him, had it not been for this his connection with this worthy perſon.

This is in ſome degree a parallel to the caſe before us. Jeſus Chriſt, the Chriſtian's friend, appears with ſuch dignity and honour in the court of heaven, and has done ſuch aſtoniſhingly great and wonderful exploits to ſecure the honour of the Almighty Sovereign and Lawgiver of Heaven and Earth, and render it conſiſtent with his granting pardon and favour to ſinners; and has ſo pleaſed and honoured the Father, and is ſo dear and excellent in his eyes, that he is ready to love and ſhew favour to any ſinner who loves this worthy perſonage, and is a real and hearty friend to him; whoſe intereſt he eſpouſes before the Father, and interpoſes all his merit in his behalf. This is quite ſufficient to recommend the moſt guilty, ill-deſerving wretch on earth to all the favour that Heaven can beſtow. He has no need to plead any thing but his relation and union to the Son of God, as his true and hearty friend; he wants nothing elſe to recommend him to the higheſt honours and happineſs in God's kingdom forever. The Father of the Univerſe will love him with a dear and everlaſting love, and embrace him as his dear child, the friend of his well-beloved, his deareſt Son. And all the angels will love, ſerve and honour him forever, becauſe he bears the character, and ſtands in the relation, of a friend to the Son of God, and is one whoſe intereſt he has eſpouſed, and whoſe name he will confeſs before the Father and before the angels.

Thus the Chriſtian has a friend who is not only moſt worthy and excellent in his eyes, with whom his heart is pleaſed and charmed; but this excellence and worthineſs is reckoned to his account, and is become his righteouſneſs, by which he is recommended to pardon and favour with God; ſo that the Supreme Majeſty and Lawgiver of Heaven and Earth hereby becomes his eternal friend and father. Therefore the higher ſenſe the Chriſtian has of Chriſt's excellency and worthineſs, and

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the more he loves him, the more confidence, aſſurance and joy will he naturally have in his merit and righteouſneſs, and ſay, "In the Lord Jeſus Chriſt have I righteouſneſs: In him ſhall I, with all the ſeed of Iſrael, be juſtified, and in him only will I glory."

9. Chriſt is not only a friend who is full of good will and benevolence to his people, but he highly eſteems them, and has great and moſt ſweet complacency and delight in them.

This is abundantly repreſented in this ſong. Chriſt often calls his ſpouſe, the church, his *fair one:* and ſhe is to him the faireſt among women. His language to his church, and to every true member of it, is, "O my dove, let me ſee thy countenance, let me hear thy voice; for ſweet is thy voice, and thy countenance is comely." "Behold, thou art fair, my love; behold, thou art fair: thou haſt doves' eyes within thy locks. Thou art all fair, my love, there is no ſpot in thee. Thou haſt raviſhed my heart, my ſiſter, my ſpouſe; thou haſt raviſhed my heart with one of thine eyes, with one chain of thy neck. How much better is thy love than wine! and the ſmell of thine ointments than all ſpices! How fair and how pleaſant art thou, O love, for delights! Since thou waſt precious in my ſight, thou haſt been honourable, and I have loved thee."

There is ſomething myſterious and wonderful in this; that Chriſt ſhould thus eſteem and delight in thoſe who are in themſelves, and in their natural ſtate, ſo mean, deſpicable, vile and odious. But this comes to paſs by his putting his own beauty and excellence upon them, forming them after his own likeneſs, and receiving them into the neareſt relation to himſelf, by which they become clothed with his righteouſneſs and worthineſs, and partake of his honour and fulneſs: ſo that in this near relation, and beautified and adorned with his own beauty and holineſs, they are honourable in his eyes, and he takes great complacency and delight in them. And as he is continually purifying and adorning

ing them more and more, and will go on to do it until not the leaſt deformity, not ſo much as ſpot or wrinkle, remains, and they are become moſt perfect beauties, ſo his complacency and delight in them is increaſing, and is *now* greater, in the view of what they ſhall ſoon be brought to, even the moſt conſummate beauty and glory, like a king's daughter, *all glorious within*, and her clothing of wrought gold: and they ſhall ſhine forth as the ſun in the kingdom of their Father, the moſt beautiful, glorious bride of the Lamb.

Now this adds an unſpeakable value and ſweetneſs to this friendſhip. In proportion as any one eſteems, loves and delights in another, he naturally, and even neceſſarily, deſires to be the object of his eſteem and complacency; and conſequently this gives him a ſweet enjoyment and happineſs, ſo far as he has evidence that it takes place, and in a degree equal to his view and ſenſe of the worthineſs and excellency of his friend. How great then muſt be the happineſs of the believer in his friendſhip with Chriſt, from this circumſtance! He has the higheſt and growing eſteem of his perſon and character, and is more and more raviſhed with his ſuperlative beauty and excellence; and nothing can be more deſirable and ſweet to him than to have the approbation and love of this glorious, excellent perſonage: and nothing is wanting to complete his happineſs, but to know that he is the object of the complacency and ſweet delight of his beſt beloved and moſt eſteemed friend. The thought of this is moſt tranſporting to his ſoul; and the more he is perſuaded and aſſured of this in this world, the more ineffable ſweetneſs does he taſte and enjoy in this friendſhip. What then will be the happineſs of this exalted friendſhip, when the beloved ſaint ſhall be made to ſhine forth as the ſun in the moſt perfect beauty, and ſhall behold the dignity, beauty and excellence of his glorious Friend and Redeemer in the meridian brightneſs and ſplendour of his glory, and his heart ſhall glow with the higheſt and moſt perfect love of eſteem and complacency towards him,

him, while this his infinitely glorious and excellent Friend returns love for love in the moſt full and ample manner, and embraces him as his deareſt and beſt beloved, giving him the greateſt poſſible aſſurance that he takes unſpeakable delight and ſatisfaction in him, and will do ſo to all eternity! This will raiſe the redeemed to heights of happineſs, and ſweet, extatic delight, beyond all conception, in the enjoyment of their exalted, moſt dear and beſt beloved friend, while they find themſelves embraced by him in the high exerciſes of ſweet love and complacence, being perfectly pleaſed and raviſhed with their love, and, in the higheſt and moſt exalted ſenſe, "his left hand is under their head, and his right hand doth embrace them." How will their hearts ſwell with the thought, and be filled full, and even run over, with ineffable delight and joy, while they think, and with the greateſt aſſurance ſay, "*This* is my beloved, and *this* is my friend!"

And it is worthy of obſervation here, that their dependence on Chriſt for all their worthineſs, beauty and excellence, as they receive it all from him, by which they become the objects of his eſteem and complacency, they being wholly without any thing of this kind, and infinitely to the contrary of it as he finds them; *this* their dependence on him will greatly add to the ſweetneſs and enjoyment, while they find themſelves thus eſteemed and beloved by him; for it is unſpeakably more deſirable and ſweet to become the objects of his love and complacency in this way, than in any other.

The ſpouſe who venerates, eſteems and loves her huſband far above all others, is happy in his embraces, and the tokens of his eſteem, complacency and delight in her, in proportion to her ſenſe of his dignity, worthineſs and excellence. And if ſhe has received all that which recommends her to him as the object of his peculiar eſteem and delight, *from him*, or ſome way by his means, this will greatly add to the ſweetneſs of her enjoyment, in a ſenſe of his great condeſcenſion and goodneſs, and her peculiar obligations to him. This is

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a faint emblem of the caſe before us; for theſe things take place in the friendſhip we are conſidering, to an immenſely greater degree, and in a far more exalted manner, than can be in any thing temporal and earthly.

And, by the way, it may be here obſerved, that the redeemed will have greatly the advantage of angels in their friendſhip with Chriſt in this particular. As Chriſt has been a greater friend to the redeemed than to angels; has exerciſed immenſely more benevolence and kindneſs, and done infinitely more for them, and ſo laid them under infinitely greater obligations to eſteem, love and honour him; ſo he exerciſes a greater love of eſteem, complacency and delight towards them, than the angels are the objects of: and that becauſe, he puts a peculiar and diſtinguiſhing beauty and dignity on them, of which the angels do not partake. As the King's bride, the queen, however mean her ſtate was before ſhe married him, is more honourable, and is much more the object of his eſteem and complacency, and he takes much more delight and ſatisfaction in her, than in any of the moſt dignified ſervants and greateſt nobles of his court, however great and honourable they are in themſelves, and ſhe enjoys a peculiar ſweetneſs in his love, and a much higher pleaſure and happineſs than any of them can do; ſo the bride, the Lamb's wife, is more happy in the embraces and peculiar love of her glorious Friend and Huſband, the King of the Univerſe, and taſtes more ſweetneſs in a ſenſe of his diſtinguiſhed affection to her, than the angels, thoſe noble ſervants of the King of Heaven, ever will or can do. Chriſt will eternally exerciſe and manifeſt a peculiar complacency and delight in them as their diſtinguiſhed friend and redeemer: and this will be the ſource of a peculiar enjoyment and happineſs, in which they will be diſtinguiſhed from all other creatures, in the love and embraces of ſuch a friend as no others ever had, or ever will have.

10. Chriſt is as much the friend of every individual, and the friendſhip between him and each one is as great,

great, ſweet and happy, and every way to as great advantage, as if he was the friend of no other perſon; yea, much more ſo.

Herein this friendſhip differs from, and has the advantage of, all others. If the love and affection of other friends is divided among a great number, and they have one common friend in whoſe friendſhip they ſhare, each one has a leſs ſhare than if he was the only beloved: and if we have one friend whom we eſteem and love much above all others, it ſeems moſt agreeable at leaſt to have a peculiar and diſtinguiſhed ſhare in his affection, and to have him a friend to us in a ſenſe and degree in which he is not to any other; ſo that a partner or rival in his affections and friendſhip is rather undeſirable than pleaſing, and tends to give an alloy to the friendſhip, rather than a ſweetneſs. This is in a peculiar manner ſo in love and friendſhip between the ſexes. The bride or ſpouſe is jealous of any rival in the affection of her huſband; ſhe is contented with nothing ſhort of having the whole of his love and affection centring in her: ſhe naturally monopolizes it to herſelf excluſively, and cannot bear to have any one ſhare with her in this friendſhip; and if this ſhould be the caſe, it will ſpoil the friendſhip for her, and the more ſhe loves him, the more unhappy and miſerable ſhe is.

And this, by the way, is a very ſtrong and ſtriking evidence, among many others, that this ſong, in which the text is found, is not a common love-ſong; as in this reſpect it is formed on a plan contrary to the nature of common love and friendſhip between the ſexes, or the bride and her lover, and which is only ſuited to the caſe before us. The beloved ſpouſe is in this ſong repreſented not as a ſingle perſon, but as a company or ſociety of perſons united in ſeeking and ſetting their affections on one perſon as their *common* friend and lover. The ſpouſe ſeeks company in her love to the bridegroom, and endeavours to draw other women to join with her in loving him, and ſpeaks of others being united with her, in this, with approbation and pleaſure: "Therefore the

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VIRGINS love thee:—Draw me, WE will run after thee:—WE will be glad and rejoice in thee, WE will remember thy love more than wine; the UPRIGHT love thee." "Whither is thy beloved gone, O thou faireſt among women? whither is thy beloved gone aſide? that *we* may ſeek him with thee. My beloved is gone down into his garden, &c.—Thou that dwellieth in the gardens, the *companions* hearken to thy voice." This is a very unnatural repreſentation for a woman to make with relation to her beloved friend, with whom ſhe is ſeeking a union and friendſhip, in which a companion or rival would be moſt diſagreeable. But it is perfectly agreeable to the caſe before us; for the ſpouſe of Chriſt is not a ſingle perſon, but a company or ſociety united together in the ſame love and affection, to one common friend, lover and huſband: and every individual believer, or friend of Chriſt, is ſo far from monopolizing his love, and deſiring to be the only object of it, that it is a great addition to the ſweetneſs and happineſs of this friendſhip, that others join with him in the ſame love, and equally ſhare in the love and friendſhip of this glorious friend and bridegroom. Each one enjoys as much of Chriſt's love, has as full and large a ſhare in his heart, and enjoys him every way as much, as if he had no other lover and friend in the univerſe: ſo that, however great the number is on whom Chriſt ſets his heart, this does not in any degree leſſen the privilege and enjoyment of any individual; for he, their common friend, has an inexhauſtible, infinite fulneſs, and is juſt as much, and all that, to each ſingle one, as if he was the only object of his love. Therefore the more love and benevolence the believer has to Chriſt, and the higher the friendſhip riſes, the more pleaſed will he be to have him eſteemed and beloved by others; and the more happineſs and joy will he have that others ſhare with him in the bleſſings of this friendſhip, in proportion to his benevolence to them, and delight in their welfare; which will always keep pace with his love to Chriſt and delight in him as the beſt and moſt glorious friend: ſo that

that every true friend of Chriſt is effectually formed and prepared to enjoy a peculiar pleaſure and happineſs in a happy and beautiful *ſociety*, who are equally devoted to this ſame friendſhip, and ſhare equally with him in the ſweet love and affection of his deareſt and moſt exalted friend.——This leads to another particular.

# Sermon V.

## The friendſhip of Chriſtians between each other.

Cant. v. 16. This *is my beloved, and* this *is my friend.*

11. THIS friendſhip between Chriſt and the true Chriſtian lays the beſt foundation for union of heart, and ſweet, exalted friendſhip with others.

Chriſt is the grand medium of all union and friendſhip in the univerſe. In this reſpect all things, both which are in heaven and which are on earth, are gathered together in ONE, in Chriſt. Chriſt has reconciled the angels to men, and made them, who otherwiſe muſt have been their eternal enemies, great friends to them, and willing to devote themſelves to the moſt friendly offices and acts towards the heirs of ſalvation, and ſpend their whole time, and exert all their powers, in acts of kindneſs, in the moſt benevolent, friendly manner miniſtering to them. And angels and the redeemed from among men ſhall finally be brought by Chriſt to dwell together forever, united in the moſt friendly, loving ſociety. And he has not only reconciled God to men, and laid a foundation for their reconciliation and union with him; but has opened a way, and made full proviſion, for reconciling men one to another, and uniting them in the moſt dear and happy union and friendſhip, which in many reſpects ſurpaſſes all that there was any

foundation for in man's primitive ſtate of innocency. Sin has broken all bonds of true union and friendſhip among men; has ſet them at variance one with another, and introduced a moſt unhappy and horrible jar and diſcord; ſo that the true character of man in his natural ſtate is, "Living in malice and envy, hateful, and hating one another." Thus all true friendſhip has fled from the earth upon the apoſtacy of man, and that which is moſt directly contrary to this took place to a moſt awful degree. And man muſt have remained in this ſtate of hatred and enmity one with another forever, had not Jeſus Chriſt undertaken in his behalf. He has taken a moſt wiſe and effectual method to bring them to a union, love and friendſhip one with another, at the ſame time that they are united to him, and become his friends; a union and friendſhip which is unſpeakably dear and ſweet, and immenſely ſurpaſſes all other friendſhips, except that which is between Chriſt and them. This friendſhip has its foundation in love to Chriſt, and union of heart to him, and is not really any thing diſtinct and ſeparate from this. The believer's love to Chriſt, and love and friendſhip to his fellow ſaints, or all that are united to Chriſt in the ſame love and friendſhip, is really one and the ſame undivided flame of love and affection; ſo that the ſame bond of love which unites their hearts to Chriſt, does alſo at the ſame time unite them to each other: and the higher their love and friendſhip to Chriſt riſes, and the ſtronger the exerciſes of it are, the more ſweet and perfect is their love and friendſhip one to another. And this their love to each other is really love to Chriſt: it is the ſame affection, exerciſed and expreſſed in this way. This is repreſented in this light by Chriſt himſelf, when he tells us in what a light this matter will be ſet at the day of judgment: "And the King ſhall anſwer, and ſay unto them, Verily I ſay unto you, in as much as ye have done it unto one of the leaſt of theſe my brethren, ye have done it unto me." If the acts of love and kindneſs which Chriſtians do, one towards another, are

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really done to Christ, and are acts of love to him; then the whole of the love and friendship between them, of which these outward acts are the testimony and fruit, is really the same thing with love to Christ. This is the great and peculiar happiness of this Christian friendship, and renders it a most refined, exalted and even divine friendship, and brings them into that sweet union, and peculiar oneness, for which their great Friend and Patron once prayed: "Neither pray I for these alone, but for them also which shall believe on me through their word; that they all may be ONE, as thou, Father, art in me, and I in thee; that they also may be ONE in us."

The believer's love to Christ, in a sense of his superlative beauty, excellence and worthiness, naturally, and even necessarily, leads him to love and delight in all those who are in any degree conformed to him, and bear his image and likeness: for this is not a different thing from loving Christ himself, as this likeness or image of Christ is Christ himself formed and living in them. And this likeness to Christ will be more especially lovely and charming to the friend of Christ, if it consists summarily in love to Christ, in a high esteem of him, and true benevolence and affection to him, which is the case here: for the more any one loves and esteems Christ, the more desirous he will be that others shall love and esteem him, and the more pleased and gratified he will be with the love and esteem which others exercise towards him; and the more will he love and esteem them, and be more benevolent towards them. He whose heart is full of benevolence and good will to Christ, must be pleased with and delight in the friendly benevolence of others to him; and this will also excite a peculiar benevolence and good will to such.

Besides, in proportion to the love any one has to Christ, he will have an affection for those who are beloved by Christ; so that Christ's love of benevolence and complacency to his people has great influence in uniting them to one another in the dearest love and affection.

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He who greatly loves a dear friend, will naturally love all that are friendly to him, and all to whom he is a friend. His being a friend to them will neceſſarily recommend them to him, and render them the objects of his complacency and benevolence. This takes place in the caſe before us, in the moſt happy manner, and to the higheſt degree. In this view and to this purpoſe it is that Chriſt propoſes his own example of love to his diſciples, as a motive and inducement to them to love one another, with that love and friendſhip which is peculiar to Chriſtians, as he knew it would have the moſt powerful influence upon them: "This is my commandment, that ye love one another, as I have loved you." No other ſociety of friends have ſuch a powerful motive to love one another as this which Chriſt ſets before his diſciples. He has loved them ſo as to give his life for them, and he has made their intereſt his own to all intents and purpoſes; and they are dear to him, and precious in his ſight, anſwerable to what he has done and ſuffered for them. If therefore they love him, if he is honourable and precious in their ſight, and they are friends to his intereſt; they certainly will love thoſe who are ſo dear to him, and have ſuch an intereſt in his affections. How greatly does this recommend Chriſtians one to another, and render them dear and precious in each others' eyes, and promote a ſweet and noble friendſhip, which is known to no other perſon in the univerſe!

And it may be further obſerved, that this ſweet, humble, Chriſtian love, which is the image of Chriſt's love and grace, ſerves further to endear Chriſtians to each other, and increaſe and heighten their friendſhip to each other: for there is a peculiar and inexpreſſible ſweetneſs and enjoyment in being beloved by thoſe who are ſo amiable and honourable in our eyes, and with ſuch an ardent, humble, ſweet and pure affection as Chriſtian love is. The Chriſtian, who has a ſenſible and moſt pleaſing idea of this love and affection, cannot feel himſelf embraced by others with this tender, beautiful,

tiful, noble love and friendſhip, without an ineffable ſenſation, which fills his heart with the moſt ſweet delight and joy, and kindles a flame in his ſoul of holy love and gratitude to them, in which he returns love for love, and embraces them with the arms of the moſt delightful, tender and heart-melting friendſhip. Thus the mutual love of Chriſtians ſerves to ſweeten and increaſe their affection to each other, and blows the coals and kindles up the fire of friendſhip to a more intenſe and vehement flame. The more ſenſible any one is that he is the object of the Chriſtian love of another, whom he eſteems highly as an amiable diſciple of Chriſt, and the more evidences and tokens he has of this love, the more will his heart be inflamed in love to him; which again will increaſe and heighten the other's love: and thus, by the influence of their mutual love and friendſhip, the ſweet flame riſes higher and higher, until they are all melted and diſſolved, and turned into a moſt pure, active, perfect flame: like two brands on fire, which burn ſlow, and give but a moderate heat, when apart; but being put together, by the mutual action and influence one on the other, the heat increaſes into a burning flame, which ſoon ſets them all on fire.

Again: Their being united in the belief of the ſame ſyſtem of ſweet, important truth, and engaged in the ſame common intereſt, and in the ſame purſuits, and having the ſame views, deſigns, temper and diſpoſition; and being, as to ſubſtance, in the ſame ſtate and circumſtances; in all theſe reſpects, and many others, being alike, united and bearing a reſemblance to each other, like the children of one family, united under one kind, wiſe friend and father; Chriſtians being thus united, and bearing this likeneſs to each other in ſo many reſpects, is many ways a great advantage to this friendſhip, and greatly adds to its beauty and ſweetneſs, and ſerves to increaſe their love, and the union of their hearts to each other.

As this is ſuch a pleaſant, delightful, as well as noble, important theme, in which every Chriſtian has ſo much concern

concern and experience, it is proper and pleasing to add a few words more, and descend into some particulars.

This friendship, which Christians have one with another, by virtue of their union and friendship with Christ, the greatest and best friend, and the fountain and source of all true friendship among men; this love and friendship has *true humility* as its foundation and basis, and its peculiar beauty and glory.

Pride is most contrary to true friendship, and always interrupts and spoils the exercises and enjoyments of it, so far as it takes place. Every one's observation and experience will bear an incontestible testimony to this, and shews that true friendship is found no where but among the meek and humble. Now Christians, by virtue of their love and union to Christ, and the friendship with him which has been described, are become humble, meek and lowly, so are in a peculiar manner formed for true and sweet friendship with each other; a friendship which far surpasses that of any other creatures in the universe. Their native state and circumstances, sinful, lost, enemies to God and the Saviour, infinitely miserable, guilty, odious and ill-deserving, lays a foundation for self abasement and humility, when truly discerned and understood, which cannot take place to the same degree in any other circumstances. And their absolute and exceeding dependence on Christ, and his rich, sovereign grace, for righteousness and strength, and every good thing, serves to set them low, and abase them forever, in their own eyes. And the wonderful, amazing humility of Christ their beloved friend, which he exercised in his astonishing stoop and low abasement for their sakes, by which he in a sense became the least in the kingdom of God, strikes their minds with a peculiar energy, and conspires with the above mentioned circumstances to humble them and lay them very low. The friends of Christ are therefore in this sense *little ones*; little in their own sight, and in true humility: they have taken Christ's yoke upon them, and have learned of him, who is, above all others, meek and lowly of heart.

heart. And as they have, under the teachings of Chriſt, a clear and affecting view of their own character, as ſinners, in all its meanneſs, contemptibleneſs and odious deformity, which they cannot have of others, their fellow Chriſtians, they naturally have a much meaner thought of themſelves than of others. Therefore, in the exerciſe of this true friendſhip, they are not diſpoſed to exalt themſelves, and be jealous of their own honour and prerogatives, and be diſpleaſed becauſe others do not love, eſteem, reſpect and honour them ſo much as they deſire, and they think they ought to do. No! but directly the reverſe of this; they are ready to think others their Chriſtian friends have too high an eſteem of them, and a love and friendſhip for them of which they are altogether unworthy. Thus Chriſtians are always diſpoſed to abaſe and humble themſelves, and, in the exerciſe of this love and friendſhip, are preferring others, and ſetting them above themſelves: and thus they are "kindly affectioned one to another," in the ſtrongeſt and ſweeteſt friendſhip, "with brotherly love, in honour preferring one another." Nothing is done through ſtrife, or vain glory; but, in lowlineſs of mind, each eſteems others better than themſelves. And, as the choſen, holy, beloved friends of Chriſt, they have "put on bowels of mercies, kindneſs, *humbleneſs of mind*, meekneſs, long ſuffering; forbearing one another, and forgiving one another, even as Chriſt has loved and forgiven them. As by pride and an haughty ſpirit cometh contention, ſo the meekneſs and humility of mind, which is eſſential to every true lover of Chriſt, prepares true Chriſtians for a ſweet, holy and intimate friendſhip one with another, which no other perſons are capable of, and in which there is a truly noble enjoyment and pleaſure, which the world can neither give nor take away, and which cannot be told to him who has never taſted it.

Moreover, the uprightneſs and faithfulneſs of which every one is poſſeſſed, who is a friend to Chriſt, and which is peculiar to them, adds a great degree of excellence

cellence and happineſs to Chriſtian friendſhip, which can be enjoyed in no other union and connection. Sincerity, truth and faithfulneſs come into the very eſſence of true friendſhip; and the more there is of theſe, the more ſafe and happy are perſons in their friendſhip. When it may be ſaid of any, what is ſaid of the wicked in general, even all that are not friends to Chriſt, "that there is no faithfulneſs in their mouth; their inward part is very wickedneſs; their throat is an open ſepulchre; they flatter with their tongue;" they are not capable of true friendſhip, whatever may paſs between them that may be called by that name. They may have a ſort of love and union to one another, on ſome occaſions and in certain caſes, as a company of pirates or banditti may have a ſort of union and friendſhip, grounded wholly upon ſelf love and intereſt. But this is a very low, mean thing at beſt; it cannot give the enjoyments of true friendſhip; and, ſuch as it is, there can be no dependence upon it, that it will continue. It being built on no ſtable principle, it ſhifts and changes, flouriſhes or dies, according to external changes, and the ſhifting of humours, intereſts and circumſtances. They may be great friends one day, and the next be at ſwords' points, hating and oppoſing each other more than any body elſe; improving all their former intimacy, and the confidence they had put in each other, as an advantage put into their hands of betraying and injuring one another to the utmoſt of their power. There are ſo many inſtances of this every where among mankind, that every obſerving perſon muſt have abundant evidence of the juſtice of this remark.

The true friends and diſciples of Chriſt are of a different character: they are ſincere, upright, true, and faithful. Therefore they are commonly characterized by this in ſcripture—the *upright*, the *juſt*, the *faithful*; by which they are diſtinguiſhed from all others. They are of a ſincere, upright and faithful ſpirit, which is peculiar to them. This, therefore, prepares them for a union

union and friendſhip with each other, which can be found no where elſe. They may open their hearts and divulge their ſecrets to each other, without danger of being betrayed, and truſt and rely on one another with a great degree of confidence and ſafety: and there is a proper foundation for a laſting and growing friendſhip, whatever changes there may be in external circumſtances. Thus they have the character of Solomon's true friend, who "loveth at all times." They love without diſſimulation. In obeying the truth, through the Spirit, their ſouls are purified unto *unfeigned* love of the brethren; and they love one another with a *pure heart*, fervently. He who is poſſeſſed of Chriſtian ſincerity, integrity and faithfulneſs, has a pleaſing idea, of which they who are not of this character have no true conception; and his heart is united to, and delights in, thoſe who appear to be of this character, with a peculiar love and affection. And the love of ſuch to each other is not built on any worldly circumſtances and connections, or ſelf intereſt. It is a more noble, exalted, ſincere affection, and is built on more ſteady, laſting principles, of which the poor, if they are the diſciples of Chriſt, are as much the objects as the rich: and it goes forth as freely and ſtrongly to thoſe who are overlooked and deſpiſed by the men of the world, as to the great and honourable. How much has ſuch a friendſhip the advantage of all others! and how greatly happy muſt ſuch friends be in each other! Every thing that is called love and friendſhip, in this world, is not worthy the name, when compared with this.

And the friends of Chriſt, who are moſt acquainted with each other, do naturally enter more and more into a near, intimate and tender friendſhip. As their acquaintance increaſes, the higher does their love ariſe. And their mutual kindneſs and acts of love and helpfulneſs one to another, and conſtant, earneſt prayers for each other, tend to keep up and increaſe their friendſhip, and render it more and more perfect, ſweet, delightful and profitable.

Thus, by virtue and in conſequence of Chriſtians' union to Chriſt, and friendſhip with him, a peculiar, dear love and friendſhip takes place between them, which is the moſt ſincere, exalted, noble and raviſhingly ſweet exerciſe and enjoyment that can take place among creatures. Their ſouls are united and knit together with the bands of the moſt pure, ſtrong and laſting friendſhip, as the ſoul of Jonathan was to David, when he loved him as his own ſoul. And as the love and friendſhip between them was, ſo is that between the friends of Chriſt; even *wonderful, paſſing the love of women.* It is unſpeakably more pure, ſtrong, fervent, ſweet, noble, ſteady and durable, than any affection and friendſhip which takes place between the ſexes, or any perſons whatſoever, which is founded only in inſtinct, or the principles of nature.

This love and friendſhip is indeed very imperfect in this ſtate, through the great imperfection and deficiency of their love to Chriſt, and their holineſs; and by reaſon of that ignorance of each other which takes place in a great degree, which prevents their certainly knowing who are true friends to Chriſt, and who are not, and having a full and adequate idea of what is truly excellent in them, and their having ſo much about them which is contrary to true friendſhip, as is all their remaining corruption and ſinfulneſs of heart. And this friendſhip is alſo imperfect in this ſtate, and often, if not always, is the occaſion of ſome uneaſineſs and pain, in the midſt of all the ſweets of it, by reaſon of external circumſtances. They are often baniſhed from each others' preſence, and obliged to live at a diſtance, by which their acquaintance and intercourſe is in a great meaſure interrupted. But if this is not the caſe, and they have much opportunity to be together, and have friendly intercourſe, they are liable to miſunderſtand each other, and are often unable to communicate the ſentiments and friendly exerciſes of their ſouls to their friends ſo clearly as would be neceſſary in order fully to gratify their love and friendſhip. And, beſides, Chriſtian

tian friends in this ſtate are liable to, and are actually the ſubjects of, many calamities and diſtreſſes of body and mind. Now, the more love and benevolence we have for our friends, the higher ſympathy ſhall we have with them under their troubles, and their burdens and calamities will neceſſarily become ours in ſome meaſure; ſo that the higher degree of love and friendſhip we have for them, the more ſhall we ſuffer with them when they are in trouble. And though there is a pleaſure even in this pain; yet, according to the ſuppoſition, pain there is, and neceſſarily will be, in ſuch a ſituation.

This view of the matter ſhews us that perfect love and friendſhip does not take place in this ſtate; nor can it exiſt to the beſt advantage, unleſs in a ſtate of perfection.

However, even in this ſtate of weakneſs and imperfection, where there is ſo much remaining darkneſs and ſin in the beſt Chriſtian, and there are ſo many diſadvantages to friendſhip, true Chriſtian friendſhip affords the moſt ſweet, refined, noble enjoyment that can be had in this life. It ſurpaſſes all other friendſhips, in this reſpect, more than the brightneſs of the meridian ſun exceeds the ſhining of the meaneſt glow-worm. They are by far the happieſt perſons on earth, who, being friends to Jeſus Chriſt, are, by virtue of this, formed for true love and friendſhip to each other, and are brought into a union and oneneſs of heart and affection, by which they delight in, embrace and enjoy each other in the arms of the moſt pure and ardent love. A ſociety of ſuch friends and lovers is the moſt bleſſed ſociety on earth, whatever their worldly circumſtances are. All earthly good, all the riches, honours and pleaſures of this world, are not to be compared with this; yea, they are utterly to be deſpiſed and contemned, in compariſon with this. And all other unions and friendſhips that take place among men, which are not founded on love and friendſhip to Chriſt, are inſipid, mean and worthleſs, compared with this *Chriſtian* friendſhip, which has infinitely the advantage of them ſo many ways.

ways. This the chriſtleſs perſon may diſbelieve; and it may be impoſſible to convince him of it, as he has really no true idea of the thing. But he who has taſted the ſweetneſs of this friendſhip, is a witneſs of the refined, ſuperlative pleaſures of it, and prefers it to all other friendſhips, unſpeakably more than he who is athirſt prefers the pure, living, cryſtal ſtream, to a warm, dirty, putrid puddle. Well may the words of the Royal Singer be applied to this noble and happy union and friendſhip: "Behold, how good and how pleaſant it is for brethren to dwell together in unity! It is like the precious ointment upon the head, that ran down upon the beard, even Aaron's beard, that went down to the ſkirts of his garments."

There has been comparatively little of this Chriſtian friendſhip, we have reaſon to believe, in the world, hitherto; but few who have known the pleaſures of this ſacred union; and moſt of thoſe who have felt and exerciſed a degree of this divine friendſhip, have had but a very imperfect and low degree of it; ſo that it has never had advantage to appear in its true beauty, and happy, glorious effects. This pure, ſoul-exalting and refreſhing love to Chriſt, and union and friendſhip to each other, has yet been a great ſtranger in this world: but the time is coming when the world ſhall be full of it; when all nations ſhall become the friends and ſervants of Chriſt, and that in the exerciſe of a high degree of love to him. And their love and friendſhip one to another will bear a proportion to this. Each one will find himſelf ſurrounded with thoſe who give ſatisfying and abundant evidence of their love to Chriſt, and beautiful, growing conformity to him, and of their peculiar benevolence to, and delight in, all the diſciples of Him whom they ſo ardently love—will therefore ſee himſelf loved and embraced by them, with the tendereſt and moſt pleaſing affection and friendſhip. And how will his heart glow with ardent love to, and ſweet delight in them, while he aſſociates and converſes with them with the moſt dear and unreſerved intimacy! yea,

their

their hearts will burn with the fire of this ſacred love and friendſhip, whenever they ſee, or even think of, one another. Then every breaſt ſhall ſwell with a degree of pleaſure and joy, which yet has been but little known; and a happineſs, which has yet been hardly taſted in this world, ſhall ſpread itſelf like a mighty, pure river of delight, over the face of the earth. But this friendſhip will not come to its full perfection and glory in this ſtate. We cannot therefore have the moſt profitable, or even a juſt idea of it, unleſs we raiſe our thoughts to that world, and glorious kingdom, into which all the friends of Chriſt will be ſhortly gathered, and united in one moſt amiable and happy ſociety, in the preſence of their common, moſt kind, excellent and exalted friend, in the beſt circumſtances, and every way under the higheſt poſſible advantages to exerciſe and enjoy the ſweeteſt and moſt perfect mutual love and friendſhip with Chriſt and one another. All that precedes this is very imperfect, and only preparatory and an introduction to this moſt perfect and happy union and friendſhip, where the moſt pure and exalted love will be exerciſed to the higheſt pitch, without any reſtraint, and ſo as to give the higheſt poſſible enjoyment.

*There* their love to Chriſt will be perfect; they will be all turned into a pure and moſt vehement flame of love to him; and *his* love will be ſhed abroad, and poured out on them, as moſt plentiful, refreſhing floods of water upon the parched ground; which they will drink in with the higheſt reliſh, and moſt ſacred, raviſhing delight. And they will each one appear in the perfect and moſt amiable image of Chriſt, perfectly excellent, beautiful and lovely, and full of the moſt ſweet and lively affection to each other. The more they love Chriſt, and the greater aſſurance and ſenſe they have of his love to them, the more love will they have to each other. They will have the greateſt eſteem of, and complacency in, one another. They will have as free intercourſe and as great intimacy with each other as they can deſire:

ſire: there will be nothing to keep them at the leaſt diſtance. They will be perfectly acquainted with each other, and have the moſt happy and eaſy way of communicating their thoughts, and pouring out their whole hearts and ſouls into each others' boſoms, and expreſſing their love to and delight in each other. If the intimacy Chriſtian friends have with each other here is ſo pleaſant, and it is ſo ſweet to be beloved by them; what will it be to be embraced with ſuch ſtrong, conſtant love, and enjoy a familiarity and intimacy, in which they will mingle ſouls, without any reſerve or reſtraint, and which will inconceivably exceed the greateſt intimacy, and moſt tender embraces, of the deareſt friends in this world! How happy muſt they be whoſe love is made perfect, and flows out to each other, without any reſtraint, in a moſt rapid torrent, and is gratified every way to the higheſt poſſible degree! And there will be nothing to cloy or abate this love; it will never fail or change, unleſs it be to grow more ardent and ſtrong. The longer they live together, and the more they are acquainted with each other, the higher will their love and friendſhip riſe. And their benevolence to each other will be pleaſed and gratified to the higheſt degree; for their friends, to whom they wiſh ſo well, are in the moſt happy circumſtances, are as happy as they can poſſibly wiſh and deſire: ſo that all their good will to each other will be exerciſed and expreſſed in the greateſt ſatisfaction and joy in their happineſs. And what kind offices, may we ſuppoſe, theſe friends will be conſtantly doing for each other, by which they will gratify and promote the happineſs of one another!

And their acquaintance and ſpecial connections in this world, and eſpecially the good they have been the inſtruments of doing to each other here, will greatly ſerve to increaſe and ſweeten their love and friendſhip in heaven. With what unſpeakable delight will theſe things be remembered and recounted to each other there! With what ineffable love and gratitude will the converted and ſaved embrace thoſe who have been the happy

py inſtruments of this; while they, on the other hand, ſhall be to ſuch the occaſion of their peculiar joy, and their crown of rejoicing forever, and be embraced by them with inexpreſſible tenderneſs, love and delight.—And, Oh, how will they that have been moſt intimately acquainted here, and united in love, and have moſt abounded in acts of kindneſs and friendſhip to each other, and have been greatly inſtrumental many ways of promoting the ſpiritual good and ſalvation of each other; how will ſuch, however they may be parted by death for a while, meet, with peculiar and unſpeakable joy, in that world, and love and embrace each other forever in the arms of the moſt tender, ſweet, exalted, growing friendſhip! In a word, there ſhall be no ſinful mixtures in their love and friendſhip, and no defects, as there always are here; but it will be moſt pure and untainted. The more they love one another, not the leſs, but the more, will they love Jeſus, their common friend: there will be no need of caution and reſtraint; no danger of running to exceſs. There will be the moſt perfect, refined pleaſure, without the leaſt pain, which unavoidably attends the moſt exalted friendſhip in this world. All the tears their friendſhip has occaſioned here ſhall be forever wiped from their eyes. There ſhall be nothing but the moſt perfect, ſweet union and harmony; nothing in the way of their expreſſing their love, and enjoying each other, without the leaſt danger or fear of having it interrupted, or of their being parted from the friendly embraces of each other, to all eternity. What a world of love and friendſhip will this be! Though all who enter into the ſchool of Chriſt have ſome experience of the ſweets and happineſs of this friendſhip, yet how low and childiſh are our thoughts and conceptions of this matter. Surely eye hath not ſeen, nor ear heard, neither have entered into the heart of any of the ſaints, the things which Chriſt has laid up for them that love him, and have entered into this divine friendſhip with him, and with each other.

A little of this friendſhip, in this world, naturally, and even neceſſarily, leads theſe Chriſtian friends, while they feel the imperfections, impediments and interruptions of this love and friendſhip here, to look forward to, and long for, that perfect ſtate, where this divine affection ſhall be exerciſed and gratified to the higheſt degree, and they ſhall eternally ſwim in a boundleſs ocean of love. The more this friendſhip flouriſhes in their breaſts now, the more weaned are they from earth, and all its enjoyments; the more are their hearts fixed on heaven, and the higher and ſtronger are their longings for the enjoyment of the ſociety and friendſhip of that world of love; and the greater is their hope and aſſurance of enjoying it forever.

And who can be willing to live and die a ſtranger to this Chriſtian love and friendſhip, and ſo miſs of that world of happineſs in which it ſhall iſſue, and where it ſhall flouriſh forever! Who can be content to give up his heart to that love and thoſe friendſhips only, which are attended with certain diſappointment, and only ſerve to perplex and torture the mind, and will aſſuredly iſſue in darkneſs, horror, and eternal hatred and diſcord!

Bleſſed, unſpeakably bleſſed, are they in whoſe hearts this love and friendſhip is begun; who, becauſe they love Chriſt, love his people alſo; and know that they love Chriſt, and have paſſed from death to life, becauſe they love the brethren.

Let us then love one another, not in word, neither in tongue only, but in deed and in truth; that hereby we may know that we are of the truth, and aſſure our hearts before God. For this is his commandment, that we believe on the name of his Son Jeſus Chriſt, and love one another.

SERMON

# Sermon VI.

## The Friendſhip between Jeſus Chriſt and Believers.

Cant. v. 16. This *is my beloved, and* this *is my friend.*

I PROCEED to mention other particulars relating to Jeſus Chriſt, conſidered in the character of the believer's friend, and the diſtinguiſhed privileges and happineſs of this friendſhip.

12. Jeſus Chriſt is an unchangeably faithful and everlaſting friend. Faithfulneſs is eſſential to the character of a friend: without this there can be no ſafety in intimacy with and confidence in him. Through unfaithfulneſs and inconſtancy profeſſed friends often betray one another; and many friendſhips are very ſhort-lived, and diſſolve and turn into enmity and diſcord. But Chriſt is a moſt faithful, unchangeable friend. He never will forſake thoſe who give themſelves up to this friendſhip; but will do all for them, and be all to them, that they truſt in him for, or can expect from him, in the character of a moſt able and kind friend; yea, he will always outdo all their expectations and wiſhes. Moreover, he will take effectual care to ſecure and perpetuate their love and friendſhip to him; ſo that the friendſhip on their parts ſhall never ceaſe after it is once begun. We have great need of ſuch a friend as this: yea, ſuch a friend is abſolutely neceſſary for us in this ſtate of weakneſs, darkneſs and ſin, and where we are ſurrounded with innumerable, implacable enemies to Chriſt and to us; who are potent and ſubtle, and are continually doing their utmoſt to prevent, interrupt and deſtroy this friendſhip. If Chriſt was not ſecurity for us in this reſpect; if he was not able, and had not undertaken, to

prevent our falling away from this union and friendſhip; alas! how ſoon ſhould we break our moſt ſolemn engagements and vows, violate the moſt ſacred obligations, and ties of the deareſt friendſhip, and turn enemies to the greateſt and beſt of friends! There is no truſt to be put in any man with reſpect to this. But in him there is ſafety; he has engaged that they who once chooſe him as their Almighty and beſt friend, ſhall perſevere in their love to him. And he is faithful who has promiſed. With regard to this, the eternal God and Redeemer is their refuge, and underneath every ſaint are the everlaſting arms of this Almighty and moſt faithful friend and Saviour. This is he who was Peter's friend, and prayed that his faith and love might not fail in the ſore trial and dangerous conflict he had to go through. And it was wholly owing to his care and faithfulneſs, that Peter did not wholly fall from his friendſhip to Chriſt; but his trial and fall were the occaſion of the increaſe of his love to his beſt, moſt faithful and deareſt friend, ſo that it ſoon roſe to ſuch an ardent flame, that he was able with the greateſt confidence to ſay, "Lord, thou knoweſt all things; thou knoweſt that I love thee." Such a friend have all who love our Lord Jeſus Chriſt in ſincerity; for whom he once loves, he always loves to the end. How ſafe and ſecure then do they feel themſelves in this love and friendſhip, that it ſhall certainly continue and flouriſh to eternity, who are able to ſay, *This* is my beloved, and *this* is my friend!

13. Chriſt is a moſt meek, tender, compaſſionate, forgiving friend.

If he did not excel in theſe things to an infinite degree, he could not be our friend. We have injured him more than any other perſon in the univerſe; and have done more to affront him, and provoke him to anger, than ever was done to any other. And even his friends have comparatively but a very ſmall degree of love and friendſhip to him; it is a mere nothing, compared to what they ought to have, and he is moſt worthy of. They are guilty of the moſt amazing ſtupidity, and

and baſe ingratitude, and in many ways and reſpects act a moſt fooliſh, wicked and unfriendly part towards him, by which they are violating the moſt ſacred laws of friendſhip, and the higheſt imaginable obligations. No friend but this in the univerſe would bear ſuch treatment, and yet continue his love and friendſhip. And was he not meek, tender, compaſſionate and long ſuffering beyond any parallel, he would ſo reſent ſuch treatment and horrid abuſe of him as to withdraw his friendſhip, and renounce them forever. But as a tender father pitieth his children, ſo he pitieth his friends; he is long-ſuffering, abundant in goodneſs and tender mercy, and ready to forgive all their folly, and wicked abuſe of his love. He will forgive them, not ſeven times only, but ſeventy times ſeven; yea, without any bounds or limits. His loving kindneſs he will not utterly take from them, nor ſuffer his faithfulneſs to fail. We have a ſtriking inſtance of this in his treatment of his friends when he was on earth. They remained in a great degree ignorant and unteachable under his conſtant inſtructions. They were inattentive, ſtupid, perverſe and unbelieving, in a manner and degree that was very criminal and provoking. Yet he bore with them, and forgave them, and continued his love and kindneſs to them. He continued to treat them with the greateſt tenderneſs and love. He conſtantly attended to their intereſt, and laboured for their good, and his love and gentleneſs made them great. In the laſt hours of his life, when the dreadful ſcene of his ſufferings for his people was juſt before him, he, as a moſt tender friend, accommodated himſelf to their weakneſs; he attended to their caſe, their ſorrow and trouble touched his heart, and he pitied them, and ſet himſelf to inſtruct and comfort them, in the moſt kind and tender manner. Such an aſtoniſhingly kind, tender and forgiving friend had they. And with tranſports of joy may every one of his true diſciples ſay, This is *my* beloved, and this is *my* friend.

14. Chriſt is the moſt wiſe, kind and able phyſician, to heal and cure all his friends of the diſorders and diſeaſes

eaſes that attend them. Such a friend they want, and no other could anſwer the end of a friend to them but ſuch an one. He finds them in a moſt dreadful condition, even *dead* in treſpaſſes and ſins. They are undone and ſlain, having died a moſt ſhockingly dreadful and truly accurſed death. Their ſouls are bruiſed and mangled in the moſt horrible manner, and torn all to pieces, as it were, limb from limb. And the devil, who has had a great hand in the horrible ſlaughter, and has the power of death, ſits brooding over and watching his prey. In this reſpect they may be compared to a dead corpſe of one who has been moſt cruelly broken on the rack, every joint being diſlocated, and each bone broken to pieces, and all the fleſh terribly bruiſed, and torn from the bones and ſinews. In this ſtate Chriſt finds them. He diſpoſſeſſes the devil, and breathes into them a degree of life, and healing influence. He finds them thus caſt out as in the open field, and ſpeaks the ſovereign, omnipotent word, and bids them *live*: and that time is a time of love. The ſoul in the exerciſe of this new life cleaves to Chriſt as its healer and huſband, and becomes his in a covenant of love and friendſhip which never can be broken. Chriſt brings them into his houſe, and his banner over them is love. He binds up their wounds, pouring in oil and wine; and waſhes away their blood from them. And now do they *firſt* begin to have a degree of ſenſibility, and to feel their dreadful diſorders, their wounds, bruiſes, and putrefying ſores. They who are wholly dead in treſpaſſes and ſins, and under the dominion of enmity againſt God and the Redeemer, are in this reſpect like the dead corpſe: whatever dreadful wounds and diſorders are upon them, they are quite inſenſible of the matter. But as ſoon as a degree of life and reſtoration takes place, there is a proportionable degree of ſenſibility: they feel their diſorders and wounds, and the need they ſtand in of healing; and that they want a phyſician infinitely diſtinguiſhed from any mere creature in wiſdom, power and goodneſs; who has a remedy which no other has or can have. They ſee Chriſt to be ſuch a phyſician.

They

They immediately say, "There is balm in Gilead, there is a physician there, exactly suited to my case." And into his hand they commit their disordered souls, despairing of a cure, unless wrought by his most skilful, tender hand. Christ, as their most faithful and kind friend, undertakes for them. He faithfully and constantly attends to their case; searches every wound to the bottom, and applies the best remedy, and that in the wisest manner, and in the best and most seasonable time; so that the cure in the end may be most complete and perfect, not leaving spot or wrinkle, or any such thing, and attended with the most advantageous consequences. And he will never leave them till he has completed it. He could indeed cure them perfectly, all at once, at a word's speaking, as he did many bodily diseases when he was on earth, and not go into such a long process, and continued course of applications, under which the patient is often put to much pain, and seems to himself to grow worse, rather than better, and sometimes is ready to despair of a cure, and say, "All these things are against me." But he takes the latter and not the former method, because that, on the whole, it is far the wisest and best; the cure is much more perfect and glorious in the end, and attended with consequences unspeakably more happy for the subjects of it. How happy then are the friends of Christ in this respect! They are connected with, and united to, a friend, who is a most skilful and kind physician, and has furnished himself with every remedy that is needed, to heal and cure them, under their singular, and otherwise desperate, disorders. And he is infinitely engaged in the best manner to effect the most complete, happy and glorious cure, and that without money and without price. He is the Lord, that bindeth up the breach of his people, and healeth the stroke of their wound. O Christian, *This* is thy beloved, and *this* is thy friend!

15. Christ is a friend who is infinitely happy, is independent and self sufficient, and has the highest honours in the universe put upon him.

This

This is an unſpeakable advantage in this friendſhip, and renders it immenſely more ſweet and happy to the friends of Chriſt than it could otherwiſe be. If our friend is in a ſtate of calamity and ſuffering, in any reſpect and degree, or is expoſed to calamity and evil, it of courſe becomes our calamity, and we neceſſarily ſhare in the evil with him, in a degree proportionable to our benevolence and friendſhip. This renders friendſhip very unhappy in many inſtances in this world, becauſe the beloved perſon is very unhappy. For true benevolence to our friend is croſſed by every degree of evil that he ſuffers, and deſires he may have all the honour and happineſs he is capable of; and therefore cannot be perfectly ſatisfied and pleaſed with any thing ſhort of this. And if our friend is as much honoured and as happy as we can imagine and deſire, this will give us an enjoyment, and render the friendſhip ſweet and happy, in proportion to the degree to which it riſes and is exerciſed. For, as we neceſſarily ſhare in the evil that our friend ſuffers, ſo we do in his happineſs. There is therefore the beſt foundation laid for happineſs in this friendſhip, that in the nature of things can be, whereby our love and benevolence to Chriſt is gratified and pleaſed to the higheſt poſſible degree.

Chriſt has indeed been ſubjected to a ſtate of calamity and ſuffering; he has ſuffered diſgrace and pain to the moſt amazing degree, and that for his friends: but he has, on the whole, loſt nothing by it. If he had, this would have been an undeſirable circumſtance, which could not poſſibly be removed, but muſt have been an alloy to this friendſhip, and a ſource of uneaſineſs to the friends of Chriſt, forever. For it will neceſſarily give pain to any one who has entered into true friendſhip with another, to have his friend a loſer in any reſpect, eſpecially to have him in the leaſt degree a loſer on his account. He cannot bear to think of being an injury or diſadvantage to his friend in any reſpect, and that, on the whole, he ſhould be a loſer by him; and it is as impoſſible to reconcile true love and friendſhip

friendſhip to this, as to unite the oppoſite parts of a contradiction. But what Chriſt has ſuffered for his people is, in this reſpect, no diſadvantage to this friendſhip; for, as has been juſt now obſerved, he has on the whole loſt nothing by it, but has been an infinite gainer. His humiliation and ſufferings, even unto death, have been the occaſion of his greater happineſs, and high exaltation. By this means, and in this way, he has been anointed with the oil of gladneſs above his fellows, and been made to drink of the river of God's pleaſures: and this has been the occaſion of his being made king of Zion, and raiſed to the throne of the univerſe, inveſted with all power in heaven and on earth, as the ſole ruler in God's moral kingdom, and final judge of all. Becauſe he thus humbled himſelf, and became obedient unto death, even the death of the croſs, therefore God hath highly exalted him, and given him a name which is above every name. He is richly rewarded, more than ten thouſand fold, for all he expended and ſuffered for the redemption of his people, and their redemption and ſalvation is the occaſion of a high degree of happineſs and honour, which he could have obtained no other way.

This does not indeed leſſen their obligations to him, for what he has done and ſuffered for them, in the leaſt imaginable degree; for they are every way as great as if he had been an infinite loſer by the means. But this is ſuited to gratify and pleaſe his benevolent friends to the higheſt degree, and add a ſweetneſs and joy to their friendſhip, inexpreſſible. The language of their friendly, benevolent hearts is, "Let him be moſt bleſſed forever: let him be exalted in the glory of his ſalvation, and have all the honours of the univerſe given to him." And when they ſee him exalted, honoured and bleſſed, as heir of the whole univerſe, and independent Lord and poſſeſſor of all things; and that this is the conſequence and reward of what he has done for the redemption of ſinners, with what unbounded joy muſt their hearts expand! while, with the moſt ſweet, ineffable delight, they

join

join their hearty Amen, and say, "Worthy is the Lamb that was slain, was dead and is alive, and liveth forever more, to receive power, and riches, and wisdom, and strength, and honour, and glory, and blessing. To him be glory and dominion forever and ever, Amen!" This circumstance greatly adds to the happiness of this friendship, and spreads ineffable sweetness through the soul of the true Christian, when he is able to say, "*This* is my beloved, and *this* is my friend."

16. All that Christ requires of his friends is, to act the part of friends to him, and to maintain, cultivate and improve this friendship between him and them.

This greatly recommends him as a friend, and is a happy circumstance of this friendship between him and his people. His condescension, love and goodness to his friends, and the intimacy and unreserved familiarity to which he admits them, have been already particularly considered. He does not take state on himself so as in any degree to keep them at a distance; nor does he impose heavy burdens on them, and subject them to hard, slavish service, as the master does his servants, in order to their enjoying his favour and friendship. No; he does not call them servants, nor in any respect treat them as such; but he calls them *Friends*, and treats them according to this most dear, soft and tender name. And all he expects and requires of them is, that they cleave to him as their friend, and as becomes his true friends, and in all respects act up to this most endeared and exalted character. In this regard the law of Christ is nothing but a law of love and friendship, as nothing else is required; it is therefore called the perfect law of liberty. All that Christ requires of his friends is, that they return love for love; that they receive and cleave to him in all proper ways, as their Almighty, infinitely excellent, kind, bountiful and benevolent friend; that they constantly look to him, and trust in him, as such, for all they want; relying wholly on his friendship and goodness, and being heartily willing, with all thankfulness, delight and joy, to be wholly and infinitely indebted to him for all things,

things, as being in themſelves nothing but emptineſs, inſufficiency, wretchedneſs, guilt and deformity; heartily acquieſcing in it that he ſhould do the office of ſuch a friend to them; that they heartily love, eſteem, honour and rejoice in him, in this character; live a life of nearneſs and intimacy with him, and follow him whereſoever he goes; and do all thoſe acts of love and kindneſs to him that become his friends, and by which they may properly expreſs and diſcover their true and ſuperlative love and friendſhip to him. Thus he tells his diſciples that he required nothing of them but that in which they might expreſs and evidence their friendſhip to him. "Ye are my friends," ſays he, "if ye do whatſoever I command you."

What a ſweet and delightful work then are all the friends of Chriſt called to! viz. to love the moſt excellent, worthy, dear and kind friend, and cultivate the greateſt intimacy and moſt ſweet friendſhip with him. In one word, he only requires them to be happy in him, in the neareſt and higheſt enjoyment of him as their friend, in the exerciſe and gratification of an inclination and affection, which gives the moſt raviſhingly ſweet and delightful enjoyment that in nature can be. Surely all the friends of Chriſt may ſay from their own experience, "His yoke is *eaſy*, and his burden *light*. His commandments are not grievous, but perfectly delightful; and in keeping them there is a great reward. The ways of wiſdom are pleaſantneſs, and all her paths are peace. We have rejoiced in the way of thy teſtimonies, as much as in all riches." And now, O Chriſtian, what does the Lord, thy all-ſufficient friend and Redeemer, require of thee, but to ſay, with joy unſpeakable and full of glory, *This* is my beloved, and *this* is *my friend*, and live anſwerable to ſuch a high profeſſion and character?

17. Another advantage and peculiar happineſs of this friendſhip is, that the friends of Chriſt have juſt as much evidence that He is their friend, as they have that they are friends to him; and this evidence riſes, and is clear, in proportion to the degree of exerciſe of love and friendſhip to him.

It has been obſerved, that it is eſſential to true love and friendſhip for any one to deſire to be the object of his love, and to have him his friend, on whom he has ſet his affections. And the more ſincere and ſtrong our friendly affection and love to another is, the more do we deſire to be the objects of his love and friendſhip; and the greater uneaſineſs and pain will attend ſuſpicions of his love to us. As it is the ſweeteſt, happieſt thing in the world, even the higheſt enjoyment we can imagine, to be beloved, eſpecially by thoſe for whom we have an high eſteem, and a ſtrong and moſt friendly affection; ſo, perhaps, nothing is more diſagreeable, or will give a more ſenſible, cutting pain, than to find ourſelves neglected and quite caſt off by ſuch. And this is eminently true in the caſe before us. True friendſhip to Chriſt does render it above all things deſirable to him that exerciſes it, to be the object of Chriſt's love and favour. And to be caſt off by him, and be the object of his diſpleaſure and wrath, is to ſuch an one, above any thing elſe, undeſirable and dreadful. In this caſe, above any other, "Love is ſtrong as death, jealouſy is cruel as the grave: the coals thereof are coals of fire, even a moſt vehement flame."

This has often proved a great unhappineſs in human love and friendſhip, eſpecially that which takes place between the ſexes. Many a one has been moſt cruelly tortured and undone by this. They have had a vehement affection and love for another, while they have found themſelves not beloved, but ſlighted and deſpiſed: this has proved to them an inſupportable burden, ſpread darkneſs over all things under the ſun, rendered them incapable of enjoying any thing, and made them weary of their own life; and has often put an end to it by a lingering, cruel death.

But the friends of Chriſt are in this reſpect moſt happy. They can no further doubt of his love to them, than they queſtion their own love and friendſhip to him. If they love him, and are his true friends, he is certainly their friend. Yea, if they love him in ſincerity, though

though in never ſo imperfect and low a degree, they are the objects of his love, and a friendſhip is begun between Chriſt and them which will continue forever. For this Chriſt has given his word to all his friends. He has ſaid, "I love them that love me; and he that loveth me, I will love him, and will manifeſt myſelf unto him. And him that cometh to me, I will in no wiſe caſt out."

We want nothing then, in order to be aſſured that Chriſt loves us with a ſtrong and everlaſting love, and is our unchangeable friend, but to know that we love him: or, in other words, we may be certain that Chriſt loves us, ſo far as we have good evidence that we ſincerely deſire and prize his love and friendſhip. And our evidence of this will be in proportion to the degree of our love to him, or the ſtrength and conſtancy of our affection and friendſhip. This is true in all inſtances of love and affection to any friend; the evidence that we do love them, and are their friends, will be in proportion to the degree and conſtancy of the exerciſe of our love and friendſhip to them, and the expreſſion of it in all proper ways. This love always evidences itſelf, and is attended with a conſciouſneſs that it does exiſt in our hearts, in proportion to the ſtrength and conſtancy of its exerciſe; and we may love a friend to ſuch a degree, as to remove all doubt, yea, render us abſolutely aſſured that we do love him.

So it is in this caſe; if we doubt whether we are true friends of Jeſus Chriſt, it muſt be becauſe we are not ſo, or are ſo in a very weak and low degree, and with great inconſtancy, and there is much in our hearts and actions directly contrary to love and friendſhip. And as this love riſes, and becomes more and more a conſtant, vigorous exerciſe and flame in the heart, the Chriſtian will have higher evidence and greater confidence that he is a friend to Chriſt; and conſequently that Chriſt is his friend. And nothing is wanting but a conſtant, vigorous exerciſe of this love, in order to a conſtant conſciouſneſs

and

and prevailing aſſurance that this glorious perſon is our beloved, and conſequently that he loves us, and is our friend.

Thus we ſee how happy this friendſhip is in this reſpect, by which it is diſtinguiſhed from all other friendſhips whatſoever. Full proviſion is made for the gratification of love to Chriſt in all reſpects. In proportion as the Chriſtian loves Chriſt, he enjoys him, and his love and friendſhip is gratified and pleaſed, in a ſenſe and evidence of Chriſt's love to him. So far as he prizes Chriſt's love, and really deſires to have him his friend, from true love to him, and has a ſenſe and evidence that he does love him, juſt ſo far he has a ſenſe and evidence that Chriſt actually is his friend, and does love him; ſo that this deſire is gratified and anſwered, and turned into a degree of ſweet enjoyment, in proportion to the ſtrength and conſtancy of it. When the Chriſtian therefore can with confidence ſay, "This is my beloved," he may with equal aſſurance add, "This is my friend." For theſe God has joined together: and nothing, neither angels, nor principalities, nor powers, nor things preſent, nor things to come, nor height, nor depth, nor any other creature, ſhall be ever able to ſeparate them.

18. This friendſhip between Chriſt and the believer will reconcile men to death, and ſupport and comfort them under the death of others, their Chriſtian friends.

It tends to make death deſirable and ſweet. Friends have been ſo united in this world, and had ſuch a love for each other, that if one muſt die, the other would chooſe to die with him; and ſo the death of one has made death deſirable to the other. But the friendſhip of which I am ſpeaking has a much more powerful influence this way, in many reſpects. When a friend to Chriſt, with his heart full of love to him, looks into the grave, and conſiders that there his deareſt Lord and friend once lay, this will ſweeten the grave to him, and make the thought of laying his head in the duſt pleaſant, and he will be ready to ſay, with one of his friends of old, "Let me die with him." Beſides, friendſhip to Chriſt

Chriſt reconciles to death, and renders it deſirable, and the thought of it ſweet, as it is the only way to the full enjoyment of Chriſt, and a dwelling with him in his holy and glorious kingdom. The friend of Chriſt longs to be delivered from all contrariety to him, as what is moſt odious, and the greateſt burden, and to get rid of all ignorance, and coldneſs, and indifference, towards him, and be turned into a perfect, pure flame of love to him; to dwell in his preſence, and honour, praiſe and ſerve him day and night: and when he ſees death to be the only way to this, he is not only reconciled to it, but is ready to long for it. And when he ſees that his Almighty Friend has conquered death, and taken away the ſting of it, with what courage and joy can he look it in the face; while with him who was one of Chriſt's great friends on earth ſeventeen hundred years ago, and is now with him in heaven, he deſires to depart and be with Chriſt, which to him is far the beſt of any thing he can conceive of or wiſh for.

Again, this friendſhip with Chriſt gives the beſt ſupport under the death of dear Chriſtian friends, and lays a foundation even for comfort in it. Herein it has the advantage of all other friendſhips. The more ſtrongly *they* take place, the more is death dreaded; becauſe this puts an utter end to the friendſhip, and cuts off all hopes of ever ſeeing and enjoying one another again. It is in this view that St. Paul ſpeaks of the ſorrow and mourning of thoſe that were no Chriſtians, on the death of their dear friends, as thoſe who *have no hope*. They are left quite diſconſolate on the death of their friends, becauſe they have no hope of ever ſeeing and enjoying them again. But Chriſtians have no reaſon to mourn ſo. They may part with each other here with high hopes and full aſſurance of meeting again in a ſhort time, and enjoying each other, to a much higher degree, and in a better manner, than ever they did before, in the preſence of Chriſt, in his glorious kingdom.

When our dear Chriſtian friends are torn from our fond embraces, and we are deprived of their ſweet company,

company, and know we ſhall ſee them no more on earth; the more we love Chriſt, and the greater is our benevolence to them, the more comfort and joy ſhall we have in the thought, that they have ceaſed from ſin, yea, from all their labours and troubles, and are gone to be with Chriſt, our great and common friend, and enjoy the benefits of this friendſhip to an immenſely higher degree than we can here; that they will ſoon be reſtored to us, with great advantage, and we ſhall ſee them in Chriſt's kingdom, unſpeakably more loving and lovely than they were here; and, in a much more noble and perfect friendſhip, ſhall reap the happy conſequence, and all the advantages, of our acquaintance and friendſhip here, and be forever with the Lord, our glorious Friend and Redeemer. Surely Chriſtians may well, under the loſs of their deareſt friends, *comfort one another with theſe words.*

19. Chriſt will bring his friends to the neareſt enjoyment of himſelf, and communion with him, where they ſhall taſte the growing ſweets of his love and friendſhip forever.

This is one peculiar excellency and privilege of this friendſhip, and what crowns all, that, with all its ſuperior excellence and ſweetneſs, and with every other advantage, and deſirable circumſtance, it will never come to an end, but will continue, flouriſh and increaſe forever. The many and great diſadvantages and imperfections that attend it in this ſtate ſhall ſoon wholly ceaſe; and every thing deſirable, and that can poſſibly advance it, in any reſpect and degree, ſhall take place, and that unſpeakably beyond the higheſt flights of the warmeſt and brighteſt imagination. This has been repeatedly brought into view, and in ſeveral particulars that have been mentioned; but it is ſo important an article of this friendſhip, that it ſeems to deſerve our more particular attention.

This friendſhip is in this world very ſweet, and exceeds all others, both in its excellency and in the enjoyment it gives. But this is but a low beginning of

ſomething

ſomething immenſely more exalted and happy; and it is only preparatory to that which ſhall be moſt perfect and everlaſting. This friendſhip is exceeding imperfect in this ſtate, has many interruptions and hindrances, and is attended with numerous inconveniences, which often occaſion great pain and diſtreſs, which is peculiar to the friends of Chriſt, and is many times very keen, and even overwhelming. Their remaining degrees of unfriendlineſs and oppoſition of heart to Chriſt, their blindneſs, ſtupidity, ingratitude; their great degree of alienation from Chriſt, their unfruitfulneſs, and the ill returns they make to him, and their want of a ſenſe of his love and favour, are a moſt heavy burden to them, under which they often go mourning all the day long. For theſe things their ſouls are bowed down, and greatly diſquieted within them. And their love to Chriſt, and concern for his intereſt in the world, is often the occaſion of great concern and trouble, while they live in ſuch a wicked world as this, in the midſt of a crooked and perverſe generation, where there are ſo many enemies to Chriſt, and his cauſe is in ſo many ways oppoſed and run down. Theſe things often cauſe them to hang their harps on the willows, in this ſtrange land, and to ſit down and weep when they remember Zion, and the intereſt of their Friend and Redeemer; and rivers of water run down their eyes, becauſe men keep not his law, but diſhonour him. And the higher their love and friendſhip to Chriſt riſes, the more affecting and painful will theſe things be to them; like the dear friends of Chriſt, the holy women who followed him weeping, when he went to the croſs, ſurrounded by an inſulting crowd of cruel enemies. Their love to Chriſt, their deareſt friend, filled their hearts with the keeneſt twinges of the moſt cutting pain, which, as a dreadful ſword, pierced their ſouls through and through.

But it is wiſely and kindly ordered that this friendſhip ſhould begin in ſuch a ſtate as this, and in theſe circumſtances; and this will all turn to its great advantage in the iſſue, and prepare the way for a higher enjoy-

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ment than if they had never taken place. Chriſt, their great friend and patron, ſuperintends, and is in this way diſciplining them, and in the beſt manner training them up for the near enjoyment of him in the moſt perfect ſtate of friendſhip and happineſs. They are eſpouſed to him, though they are in an enemy's country; and he is preparing them for the happy nuptials, when they ſhall be brought into his preſence, and kind embraces, never to part again. And all their pain and ſorrow in this world, which they have ſuffered on his account, and all they have done and ſuffered for him, ſhall in the end ſerve to increaſe their enjoyment and happineſs, and be richly rewarded by him.

He has deſired and prayed that they all may be where he is, that they may behold his glory, and enjoy him to the beſt advantage, and in the higheſt degree; and he will never reſt till he has brought them to this. He will bring them to ſhare in his own honours and happineſs, as fully as their enlarged capacities will admit. He will ſeat them at his own right hand; yea, they ſhall ſit down with him on his throne, and reign jointly with him, as the queen ſhares in the dignity and honours of the prince her huſband. They ſhall drink with him of the river of his pleaſures, and enjoy all that he has, even the whole of his boundleſs riches and moſt extenſive kingdom. He will bring forth all his hidden treaſures for them, and open his heart to them in the fulleſt manner and without any reſerve. He will make them perfectly like himſelf, and put his own beauty and glory upon them, and bring them to a high and perfect reliſh for his beauty, and put them, in all reſpects, and every way, under the beſt advantage to love and enjoy him forever. This ſhall perfect this friendſhip, which will be increaſing in unknown, inconceivable heights forever and ever.

Thus they ſhall be ſatisfied, perfectly ſatisfied, and inconceivably happy, when they ſhall awake in his likeneſs, and ſtand complete before him, the beloved of their ſouls, in whoſe preſence is fulneſs of joy, and at whoſe

whoſe right hand are pleaſures forever more. Then it will be ſaid concerning every one of the true friends of Chriſt, "Theſe are they which came out of great tribulation, and have waſhed their robes, and made them white in the blood of the Lamb. Therefore are they before the throne of God, and ſerve him day and night in his temple: and He that ſitteth on the throne ſhall dwell among them. They ſhall hunger no more, neither thirſt any more, neither ſhall the ſun light on them, nor any heat. For the Lamb, which is in the midſt of the throne, ſhall feed them, and ſhall lead them unto living fountains of waters: and God ſhall wipe away all tears from their eyes." Then ſhall Chriſt appear, in all his fulneſs and glory, as the head of his church, and, in the higheſt and moſt emphatical ſenſe, ſay, "I am come into my garden, my ſiſter, my ſpouſe. Eat, O friends, drink, yea, drink abundantly." Then the angels will tune their notes higher than ever, and ſay, with a voice like the voice of many waters, and as the voice of mighty thunderings, "Let us be glad and rejoice, and give honour to Him, the glorious friend and bridegroom of the redeemed; for the marriage of the Lamb is come, and his wife hath made herſelf ready."

The friends of Chriſt now little think what they are coming to, and what will be the iſſue of theſe exerciſes they now have. They have already ſeen and enjoyed what others never have; for Chriſt in his ſuperlative glory and excellence has been manifeſted unto them: but they ſhall ſee greater things than theſe. And the words which Chriſt ſpoke to one of his diſciples when he was on earth, are applicable to all of them: "What I do thou knoweſt not now, but thou ſhall know hereafter." "Beloved, now we are the ſons of God, the friends of Chriſt; and it doth not yet appear what we ſhall be: but we know that, when he ſhall appear, we ſhall be like him; for we ſhall ſee him as he is."

# Sermon VII.

## On Chriſtian Friendſhip.

Cant. v. 16. This *is my beloved, and* this *is my friend.*

### Application.

I. THIS ſubject as it has been conſidered affords great evidence of the truth and divinity of Chriſtianity, and of all the great and leading doctrines; and at the ſame time ſhows how the Chriſtian, though not learned, or of great natural capacity, is aſſured that it is a revelation from the only true God, and will give eternal life and happineſs to all who cordially embrace it.

If the goſpel is formed and ſuited to give thoſe who embrace it the higheſt and moſt refined and noble enjoyment, which is the beginning of moſt complete and endleſs happineſs; if, ſo far as it has its proper and genuine influence on the hearts and lives of men, it ſpreads happineſs through ſociety, and forms all to a happy union, by which they promote, enjoy and rejoice in the welfare of each other; and brings them into a friendſhip, which is in the nature of it perfect, having nothing undeſirable, and nothing wanting to render it the moſt excellent, noble and durable love and friendſhip that can be imagined; then it muſt be divine, a revelation from heaven, the production of Infinite Wiſdom and Goodneſs. But that all this is true, has been made abudantly evident, by the very imperfect repreſentation in the preceding diſcourſes. And it is ſufficiently ſupported by the ſcripture itſelf, by impartial reaſon, and by abundant experience.

This ſcheme of friendſhip and happineſs for man never would have been thought of by any one of the human race, had it not been revealed from heaven. Hence it is

is made certain that no other ſcheme of religion, but that revealed in the Bible, is true, or can make men happy by embracing it; and that all other methods to obtain happineſs, of which there are many deviſed by the wit and learning of the moſt ſagacious among men, are mere deluſions, and never will or can obtain it. For when the world by their wiſdom knew not God, or the way to true happineſs, it pleaſed God, by the fooliſhneſs of preaching, to ſave, and make completely and eternally happy, all them who believe.

But the unbeliever will ſay, "I do not pretend to underſtand the ſcriptures; but I am certain that my reaſon and experience dictate that there is no happineſs in attending to the Bible, but very much the contrary. And the ſpread of Chriſtianity in the world has been far from making mankind more happy than they were without it. It has been the occaſion of unſpeakable calamity. And even profeſſing Chriſtians, inſtead of being united by it in love and friendſhip, have been the greateſt enemies to each other, and deſtroyed one another in the moſt cruel manner."

*Anſwer.* That ſuch have received no happineſs by the attention they have paid to the Bible, is not an argument of the leaſt weight that it is not to be found there. Men may come to the Bible with a ſtrong and prevailing diſpoſition and taſte of mind or heart which does not reliſh that in which true happineſs conſiſts; but is highly diſguſted and diſpleaſed with it. With this vitiated taſte they reliſh and ſeek after happineſs, where it cannot be found, being wholly blind to theſe ſpiritual, noble objects and truths, in the knowledge and enjoyment of which there is the higheſt happineſs. And ſuch a wrong taſte and diſpoſition tends to bias their underſtanding and reaſon, ſo as to render it partial, and incline to ſpeculative error. It is therefore to *impartial* reaſon that we appeal.

This blindneſs, which conſiſts in a wrong taſte and diſpoſition of mind, the ſcripture ſpeaks of as common to all men in their natural ſtate; and when it ſo commonly

monly takes place, it is a confirmation of the truth of the ſcripture: "The natural man receiveth not the things of the Spirit of God; for they are fooliſhneſs unto him; neither can he know them, becauſe they are ſpiritually diſcerned."

As to the effect which Chriſtianity has had in the world, it is acknowledged that where it has been perverted and abuſed, it has been the occaſion of much evil. The beſt things are capable of abuſe, and of being made the occaſion of great miſery. But this is no argument againſt their excellency, and tendency to the greateſt good, when improved according to their nature. In order to be under advantages to determine this queſtion, we muſt ſtudy the Bible, and learn what are the doctrines and precepts contained in it. Every one who with impartiality and a right or good taſte does this, ſees what Chriſtianity is, and knows that in conformity to it, the greateſt peace, love and friendſhip, and the moſt pure and noble happineſs, is to be enjoyed; though an abuſe of it may be attended with the worſt conſequences.

This brings into view the other part of the inference we are conſidering, viz. that the true Chriſtian has a conſtant evidence in his own mind that Chriſtianity is from heaven, and will give complete and eternal life and happineſs to all who embrace it. They have found and taſted this happineſs, conſiſting in Chriſtian friendſhip to Chriſt and to all who appear to bear his image, and know that nothing is wanting in order to their complete felicity forever, but to have this friendſhip perfected, and attended with every circumſtance favourable to it. They are ſure this ſcheme is from heaven, and has a divine ſtamp upon it, as it is as much beyond man to form it, as to create the world. They may not be able to produce all which is called the *external evidence* of the truth of Chriſtianity, or to anſwer all the ſubtle cavils and objections and witty ſcoffs of infidels, but are able to ſay, with the primitive Chriſtians, "We know that the Son of God has come, and hath given us an underſtanding that we may know him that is true. This is the

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true God, and eternal life." And they are witneſſes to the truth declared by their beloved Lord and Saviour: "This is eternal life, that they might know thee the only true God, and Jeſus Chriſt whom thou haſt ſent." They have found the treaſure hid in a field, the pearl of great price. They have found all they want to make them eternally happy; and cheerfully forſake and give up every thing elſe, and renounce all hopes or deſires of any other happineſs, for the ſake of theſe.

II. How happy are the true friends of Chriſt! They have a degree of ſweet enjoyment and happineſs now, which ſtrangers intermeddle not with, in love and union of heart to Chriſt and their fellow ſaints. They taſte the ſweets of Chriſtian friendſhip, in compariſon with which all other enjoyments are low, inſipid and worthleſs. They ſee ſuch ſuperlative, raviſhing beauty and excellence in their moſt beloved friend, that they are become inſenſible and dead to all thoſe objects which glitter in the eyes of the world, and charm their hearts, by which they are hurried on in the purſuit of them with the greateſt eagerneſs. They have a friend of ſuch excellence and worth, that it will take an eternity to tell what he is, and make a full diſplay of his ſufficiency and perfection. What though their portion in this world is mean, and their lot hard; it is ordered by their kind, wiſe friend for their beſt good. What though they may be overlooked, yea, deſpiſed, by men, and are counted the offſcouring of all things; their names are enrolled in the moſt honourable place in heaven; they are engraven on the breaſt of Him who is at the head of the univerſe, who is their Almighty and everlaſting friend, and will confeſs their names before the congregated univerſe. Their life is hid with Chriſt in God: and when Chriſt their friend, who is their life, ſhall appear, then ſhall they alſo appear with him in glory. Though they are inconceivably unworthy, guilty, deſpicable and ill-deſerving in themſelves, yet their friend to whom they are united has dignity and worthineſs enough to recommend to the higheſt honours

nours and happineſs. Becauſe they love him, and have united themſelves to him, as their friend and patron, the great Father of the univerſe loves them, and is diſpoſed to beſtow on them all imaginable favours and honours; and all the angels delight in them, and join to ſerve and honour them. By virtue of their union to and intereſt in this friend and patron, they are counted worthy of immenſely higher honours and happineſs than their moſt perfect and longeſt continued holineſs could have entitled them to. The low, guilty and wretched ſtate into which they are fallen by ſin, ſhall on the whole be no diſadvantage to them, but infinitely to the contrary. All this evil ſhall be turned into the greateſt good to them. From this infinite depth of guilt and wo, in which they are ſunk infinitely below the reach of any finite arm, they ſhall be raiſed to the top of the creation, and be made the higheſt and happieſt of all, next to the moſt bleſſed and glorious perſonage to whom they are united, and bear the moſt near and honourable relation. With him they ſhall dwell forever, and be admitted to as great intimacy and familiarity as if he was their equal, and immenſely more, even as great as they can poſſibly deſire—ſhall conſtantly have all the tokens and expreſſions of his love they can wiſh for, and enjoy a dear and ſweet friendſhip with him, without interruption, which ſhall exceed every thing of the kind beyond conception, and will grow more and more ſweet and tranſporting through boundleſs duration, eternal ages. In that world of love, where all ſhall ſwim in this river, this boundleſs ocean of ſacred pleaſure and delight, they ſhall have the ſweeteſt, the cream of all; as the firſt-born, they ſhall inherit a double portion forever.——But I muſt ſtop; the theme is boundleſs.

Am I ſpeaking to any of the friends of Jeſus Chriſt, who love him in ſincerity, and as chaſte virgins are eſpouſed to him? Hail, ye bleſſed of the Lord! Ye are greatly beloved by him, and nothing ſhall be able to ſeparate you from his love. All things are working together for your good. Jeſus, the beloved of your ſouls,

ſouls, is at the head of the univerſe, and is the appointed judge of all. Lift up your heads, and rejoice, for your redemption draweth nigh. You ſhall ſoon ſee him at the head of his moſt glorious kingdom, with all his enemies under his feet. He will completely fulfil all the good pleaſure of his goodneſs toward you. All things are for your ſakes, that his abundant grace might, through the thankſgiving of many, redound to the glory of God. Be entreated then not to faint, but lift up the hands that hang down, and the feeble knees. Let us not ceaſe to pray for one another, and for all the ſaints, that the God of our Lord Jeſus Chriſt, the Father of Glory, may give unto us more of the ſpirit of wiſdom and revelation in the knowledge of him; the eyes of our underſtanding being enlightened; that we may know what is the hope of his calling, and what the riches of the glory of his inheritance, which he has provided for all the ſaints.

III. But who are theſe moſt happy perſons, the true friends of Jeſus Chriſt? Many are doubtleſs deceiving themſelves in this important point. They are profeſſing great love to Jeſus Chriſt, and are confident that he is their friend, while indeed they know him not, and are real enemies to his true character; and will be found at laſt the workers of iniquity, of whom he will be aſhamed, and reject them, as thoſe whom he never knew. There may be others who, though they are his real friends, are often calling their love and friendſhip to Chriſt in queſtion, and ready ſometimes even to conclude againſt themſelves. It may therefore be worth while to attend to this queſtion a little, to which the ſubject we are upon naturally leads us.

Doubtleſs many readers have had this ſerious and important queſtion in view, through the whole of the preceding diſcourſes. And while we have attended to the nature, peculiar circumſtances and exerciſes of this friendſhip, much has been ſaid to give light in this matter, and aſſiſt perſons in determining whether they are in any degree acquainted with this divine friendſhip, or not.

not. But, for the further aſſiſtance of thoſe who are ſeriouſly inquiring whether they are true friends to Chriſt, or not; that the truly ſincere may be encouraged and comforted, and the preſumptuous ſelf-deceiver may be detected and convinced; it may be worth while to attend to the following particulars, which this ſubject naturally brings into view.

1. True friendſhip to Jeſus Chriſt is not grounded on, and does not originate from, a conviction and belief that he loves them and is their friend.

This has been apparent in the whole deſcription that has been given of this love and friendſhip; and is moſt evident from the reaſon and nature of things. Where one loves, and is a friend to, another, only becauſe he is perſuaded that the other loves him, there is no real benevolence, eſteem, complacency or true friendſhip in the caſe. It is nothing but *ſelf love*, called out to exerciſe in this particular way, in which there is not a ſpark of true friendſhip; but is a principle moſt directly oppoſite to it of any in nature. The man is a friend to himſelf, he is wholly bound up in his own private intereſt, and values and ſeeks nothing elſe, and takes no complacency and delight in any thing elſe, in no perſon or thing, any further than, in his view, it is friendly to him, or tends ſome way to promote his intereſt; or that which he looks upon ſo. Such an one, continuing ſo, is not capable of true friendſhip, to which diſintereſted benevolence is eſſential. This is ſo plain a dictate of the common ſenſe and feeling of mankind, that it cannot be diſputed. If the affection and friendſhip of any one to us is evidently wholly grounded in the kindneſs he has received from us, and our friendſhip towards him; and all his affection and regard is excited and kept up by this conſideration only; ſo that if we ſhould leave off to ſhew kindneſs to him, or he ſhould ſuppoſe that we were not his friends, all his affection and friendſhip would immediately ceaſe; if this was evidently all the friendſhip he has for us, we cannot help looking on ſuch an one not to be our true friend. Such ſort of friendſhip

ſhip as this may take place between perſons who have not the leaſt degree of true benevolence, and who are real enemies to each other's true character. And all mankind have joined to pronounce it a worthleſs thing, and not worthy the name of true friendſhip. And it is as diſtant from true friendſhip, and as worthleſs, when exerciſed towards Jeſus Chriſt, as if it was exerciſed towards us. Yet many are here deceiving themſelves, and offering that to Chriſt for his acceptance, which if we ſhould offer to any of our fellow men, they would deſpiſe and abhor it.

But the true friends of Chriſt have had their affection and love to him excited, and they have commenced his true friends, from a view of his true character, exhibited in divine revelation, eintirely ndependent of the conſideration of his loving and being a friend to them. When his character was once opened to their view, and they ſaw what manner of perſon he was, they were pleaſed and charmed with him, and their hearts became friendly to him in a moment. They did not, neither could they, ſtay till they knew he was their friend, and loved them, before they commenced his friends, and gave their hearts to him. No; they could not but love him, whether he loved them or no. That this is always true of the real friends of Chriſt, is evident to a demonſtration, not only from what has been juſt now obſerved of the nature of true friendſhip, there being no other ſuch, but that which is founded in a diſintereſted love and affection; but from this plain and infallible truth, viz. that we can have no evidence that Chriſt is our friend, and loves us, until it is evident that we are his friends. There is no other poſſible way for any perſon to know, or have the leaſt ground to think, that Chriſt is his friend, but by firſt becoming a friend to him. If therefore he waits, and neglects to become friendly to Chriſt, till he has ſome evidence that Chriſt is more a friend to him than to every other perſon, he never will be a friend to him. We are therefore certain, that if there are any friends to Chriſt in this world,

they became ſo antecedent to any evidence which they had that Chriſt was their friend, and loved them: for it is impoſſible they ſhould have any ſuch evidence antecedent to their love to him, and as the ground and ſpring of it; this evidence being always conſequent on our love to Chriſt, and never before it. Chriſt ſays, "He that loveth me, I will love him; or, I will love them that love me." Here we ſee Chriſt's love and friendſhip is grounded on a perſon's love to him, and is the conſequence of it; therefore the latter cannot be the conſequence of the former, and grounded on that. And here Chriſt promiſes his love and friendſhip to them who love him; therefore, according to this promiſe, our love to him is the only evidence that he is our friend. And there is not one promiſe in the Bible, of Chriſt's ſpecial love and friendſhip to any one, unleſs he has that character which implies true love to Chriſt: or, they who are not true friends to Chriſt have no promiſe made to them of Chriſt's ſpecial love and favour; therefore can have no degree of evidence of it, while they continue ſuch. They therefore who think they have had any token or evidence of Chriſt's ſpecial love to them, antecedent to their loving him, or before they become his friends, are moſt certainly deluded. And they whoſe friendſhip to Chriſt is built on ſuch a ſuppoſition, and has originated wholly from the belief that he was their ſpecial friend, are founding all their friendſhip on a groſs deluſion, and are indeed no true friends to Chriſt, and need nothing but to ſee the truth, in order to know they are not. And they who will not love Chriſt, and become friends to him, till they firſt know, or believe on good evidence, that he is their ſpecial friend, will never be his friends in this world; therefore will certainly remain his enemies to all eternity.

The true friends of Chriſt love him for what he is in himſelf; and all their friendſhip to him conſiſts originally and fundamentally in this. He has worthineſs and excellency, beauty and charms enough in his perſon and character to win the heart of any one who has the leaſt degree

degree of true diſcerning, and right taſte and diſpoſition. If perſons have no degree of ſuch taſte and diſcerning, all the poſſible manifeſtations and teſtimonies of Chriſt's ſpecial love to them would not beget the leaſt ſpark of ſuch a diſpoſition; ſo would not produce the leaſt degree of true friendſhip: therefore would do no manner of good to ſuch an one, but hurt; as it would be the occaſion of the exerciſe of the wickedneſs and luſts of his heart, and leave him really a more confirmed enemy to Chriſt than he was before. But if perſons have any degree of right taſte and diſcerning implanted in their hearts (which is always done in regeneration) they will love and be charmed with the beauty and excellence of Chriſt's character, and commence his true friends immediately, before they know, or have the leaſt evidence, that he is their friend, or has any ſpecial love to them. And it is in conſequence of their thus loving and cleaving to him, that he manifeſts himſelf to them as their ſpecial Friend and Redeemer. And this manifeſtation is made by the medium of their love to him, which, as has been before obſerved, is in all caſes the only evidence that any perſon can have that Chriſt is indeed his friend. Chriſt himſelf has on deſign ſtated this matter as plain as words can make it. He ſays, "He that loveth me, I will love him, and will manifeſt myſelf unto him."

It is granted that the manifeſtation and evidence of Chriſt's ſpecial love to his true friends will greatly increaſe their love to him; and therefore, in a ſenſe and degree, they love him becauſe he firſt loved them; or, his love to them, manifeſted in the way juſt mentioned, does render him more dear to them, and greatly increaſe and ſweeten their love and friendſhip for him. But if they had no antecedent love to him, grounded upon what he is in himſelf, ſuch manifeſtation would not be the occaſion of any true love, as has been obſerved. When therefore a ſenſe and manifeſtation of Chriſt's love to them is ſaid to be the occaſion of their love to him, it is ſuppoſed that they were already, and antecedent

dent to this, his true friends. The more true love and friendſhip we have for any one, grounded on the true worth and excellence of his character, the more pleaſing will it be to us to be beloved by him, and the more will it increaſe our love and friendſhip.

The view of this matter which we have now had is ſufficient to demonſtrate, to every conſiderate, unprejudiced perſon, that thoſe remarkable words of the apoſtle John, *We love him, becauſe he* FIRST *loved us*, cannot mean that our love to Chriſt originates from a belief and ſenſe of his love to us, as the proper cauſe and reaſon of it, ſo that men never love him in any other view, or on any other account, and our love to him is in proportion to the evidence and manifeſtation of his love to us, ſo that when this evidence ceaſes, and we call in queſtion his love to us, our love to him ceaſes, and again riſes in proportion to our belief and aſſurance that he is our friend. This is the meaning that many have put on them, and earneſtly contended for. But what has been ſaid is ſufficient to ſhew that they herein contend for a love and friendſhip to Chriſt which is not true friendſhip, but is perfectly ſelfiſh and mercenary, ſo cannot be that in which true Chriſtianity conſiſts. The worſt of men will love thoſe that love them, without any alteration in their moral character at all. Such a love is no virtue, but rather a vice, as it is only the exerciſe of their luſts. And theſe ſame men will love Chriſt, if they can be perſuaded to believe that Chriſt loves them, and yet be as deſtitute of true religion, and as vicious, as ever. And whoever is a friend to Chriſt only in this view, and on this account, has no true religion, and is at bottom a real enemy to Chriſt. The meaning of theſe words then, "We love him becauſe he *firſt* loved us," muſt be, that God's love and benevolence to us is the ground and reaſon of our ever being brought to love him, as we never ſhould have been brought to ſuch a temper and diſpoſition, but have continued his enemies, had he not, from his eternal, electing love, given us a new heart, a heart to love him: ſo that, in this

ſenſe,

ſenſe, his love to us, which is *firſt*, even from eternity, is the cauſe of our love to him. This is a certain truth, and theſe words are as well adapted to expreſs it as any that can be thought of. Our Saviour, ſpeaking of the ſame thing, viz. the love and friendſhip between his diſciples and himſelf, expreſſes it in different words. He ſays to them, "Ye have not choſen me, but I have choſen you;" i. e. my previous choice of you to be my diſciples and friends has been the reaſon of your becoming my friends and followers, as you never would have become my friends, had I not brought it about: ſo you now love me, and are become my friends, becauſe I *firſt* loved you, looked you up, and called you by my influences and grace. What the Apoſtle plainly means to aſſert here is, that in the work of redemption, in which a reconciliation is brought about between God and man, and a mutual love and friendſhip takes place, God is the firſt mover, and not man. This is the theme he is upon, as appears by the tenth verſe: "Herein is love, not that we loved God, but that he loved us, and ſent his Son to be a propitiation for our ſins." God is firſt in his love to man, by which he has provided a Mediator; and then, by his motion and influences, brings men to love him. And thus we are brought into this friendſhip, and love God and the Saviour, not as firſt moving in the affair ourſelves, but becauſe God *firſt* loved us. The devil knew that ſuch a *ſelfiſh* religion is not true religion, but is an argument that a man is really a wicked man, and an enemy to God; therefore he ſaid, in order to ſet *Job* in a bad light, and inſinuate, that the character God gave of him, as an *upright man*, did not belong to him; "Doth Job ſerve God for nought?" &c: *q. d.* "Job is wholly ſelfiſh and mercenary in what he does, and has no true reſpect and love to God, nor is really his friend: for all the love and ſervice he renders to God is grounded on God's love and kindneſs to him, and the good he gets by it. Therefore only take away theſe tokens of love and goodneſs, and his love will wholly ceaſe, and he will turn an enemy

enemy to God." And God implicitly grants, that if this was the caſe with Job, he was not worthy the character he had given him; therefore proceeds to put this matter to the trial. Wo to the perſon whoſe love and friendſhip to Chriſt is built on no better foundation than this. When the trial comes, he will be found wanting, even juſt ſuch an one as the devil would have him be; a real and confirmed enemy to Jeſus Chriſt.

Let every one, then, who is inquiring whether he is a true friend to Chriſt, or not, ſee to it that he does not deceive himſelf here, while all his love and affection is only a *ſelfiſh* thing, ariſing wholly from a thought and belief that Chriſt is his friend, and not conſiſting in any true ſenſe of his worthineſs, ſuperlative excellence and beauty. The true friends to Chriſt love and eſteem him, are pleaſed with his perſon and character, and are friendly and benevolent to him, rejoicing in his honour and happineſs, independent of his love to them; and therefore if he ſhould caſt them off forever, and their character continue the ſame, this would not deſtroy their love to him; but they would, notwithſtanding this, continue his hearty friends, even under the higheſt tokens of his diſpleaſure; could he do this conſiſtent with his true character.

2. The true friends of Chriſt are ſubmiſſive and obedient to him.

There is no true principle of obedience but love; and juſt ſo far as this takes place, there is a ſpirit of obedience. So far as one is a true friend to another, he is devoted to his ſervice, and is at his beck, eſpecially if he is his ſuperior, and has a right to dictate and command. And with what freedom and pleaſure do we ſtrive to ſerve and pleaſe our dear friends! This is no taſk, but a privilege. What influence then will true love and friendſhip to Chriſt have in this reſpect! with what ſweet delight do they devote themſelves to Him, looking on his ſervice as the greateſt privilege and happineſs that they can conceive of! They long to be all ſubmiſſion and obedience to him, from a ſenſe of the ſweetneſs

ſweetneſs and pleaſure of it. As ſoon as they become friends to him, they are reconciled to and pleaſed with all his inſtitutions, commands and ways. They eſteem all his precepts concerning all things to be perfectly right. They will meditate on his precepts, and have reſpect to all his ways. Yea, they will delight themſelves in his ſtatutes, and rejoice in the way of his teſtimonies, more then in all riches. They well underſtand the Pſalmiſt when he ſays, "I opened my mouth, and panted, for I longed for thy commandments." They are not diſpoſed to pick and chooſe for themſelves, but are ready to ſign a blank, and ſay, "Lord what wilt thou have me to do?" With this diſpoſition they read God's word, deſiring to find what is that good and perfect and acceptable will of Chriſt. They are not offended at the croſs, or ſcared at the proſpect of ſufferings for their dear Lord and Maſter; but are ready to look upon this as a great privilege and happineſs. All this is the natural and even neceſſary attendant of true friendſhip to Chriſt. This our dear Lord has expreſſed repeatedly in the ſtrongeſt terms. His words are, "He that hath my commandments and keepeth them, he it is that loveth me. If a man love me, he will keep my words. Ye are my friends, if ye do whatſoever I command you."

There are many profeſſed friends of Chriſt who are found wanting, yea, eſſentially defective, when tried by this plain, infallible rule, which is moſt inſiſted on of any in the word of God, as the beſt rule of trial. They have, it may be, at times had ſome uncommon motions and affections of ſoul, as they fondly think, towards Chriſt: and in theſe they reſt as a ſure evidence that they are become friends to him. But what is the fruit in their life and converſation? Why, it may be truly ſaid of them, they profeſs great love and friendſhip to Chriſt, but in works they diſhonour and deny him. They call him Lord and Maſter, but do not the things that he ſays: therefore we may be ſure they are not his friends; that all their affection, love and joy, however high it riſes, is of a ſpurious kind, and has nothing of the nature of true love to Chriſt.

Look

Look well to yourſelves in this point, my friends. Flatter not yourſelves that you are friends to Chriſt, unleſs you are wholly devoted to his ſervice, and are, with great exactneſs and conſcientious care, labour and watchfulneſs, attending upon whatſoever he has commanded, and avoiding all that he has forbidden, in thought, word and deed: at the ſame time not counting this a taſk, but a privilege, from which you never deſire to be releaſed.

## Sermon VIII.

### On Chriſtian Friendſhip.

Cant. v. 16. This *is my beloved, and* this *is my friend.*

3. IF PERSONS are the true friends of Chriſt, their obligations to him appear exceeding great to them.

It is the nature of true friendſhip to operate thus. This above all things tends to make perſons ſenſible of the obligations they are under to their friend, and to be ready, and even delight, to acknowledge them. The more we eſteem and love any one, the greater does his kindneſs to us appear, and the more are we affected with it, and, conſequently, the more ſenſible ſhall we be of the obligations we are under to him; and the more ſhall we be pleaſed and delighted in being thus obliged.

This takes place in the friendſhip we are now conſidering, to a degree beyond any parallel. No obligations in the univerſe are ſo great as thoſe of Chriſt's friends and ſervants to him. They are enhanced to an amazing degree, and become infinite every way. They are enough to fill the ſoul with wonder and aſtoniſhment, and

and ſwallow up all thought. And his friends are not without a ſenſe of this. They feel themſelves bound to Chriſt by the ſtrongeſt ties, which are beyond all expreſſion. He has bought them by his own precious blood, and what obligations do they acknowledge themſelves to be under, to be wholly and forever devoted to him, with the utmoſt ſtrength of their hearts!

If you are the friends of Chriſt, this has been often a very affecting theme to you. You have felt and acknowledged your obligations to Chriſt, with an ardour of ſoul inexpreſſible, and with a great degree of ſweetneſs and delight. And you have ſaid, many a time, "What ſhall I render to the Lord and Saviour for all his benefits?" And you have found you had no returns to make anſwerable to the immenſe obligations you are under to him.——This leads to obſerve,

4. The friends of Chriſt never think they have done enough for him, but always, in their own view, come vaſtly ſhort of what they owe to him.

This is always the attendant of true friendſhip among men, eſpecially where one is a great friend to another who is much his ſuperior every way, and to whom he is under great and peculiar obligations. He is not afraid of doing too much for his friend; but always comes ſhort of what he would be glad to do, being ready to purpoſe and do more than he does. And he is not apt to magnify what he has done, and think he does a great deal, as he does it with ſo much pleaſure, and his obligations appear ſo great; but he is diſpoſed to think it little, or even nothing; and if his friend appears to take great notice of it, he is ready to wonder at it, and think he greatly magnifies it. He thinks he is to blame that he has done no more, and is uneaſy with himſelf on this account, and wonders that ſuch notice ſhould be taken of what he has done.

But in the caſe before us, this takes place in a higher degree than in any other; as the Chriſtian's friend is ſo much more worthy and excellent than any other, and he is under ſo much greater obligations to him, and

his defects and ſhort comings are ſo much greater and more aggravated than in any other caſe. All the Chriſtian does, and renders to Chriſt, ſinks into nothing, in his view, and he looks upon it as amazing condeſcenſion in Chriſt to take any notice of it, or accept it. He can heartily and feelingly eſpouſe the language of a certain great friend of Chriſt, who was once in our world, but is now in heaven with him: "What I would, that I do not; and what I would not, that I do." I am infinitely in debt to my glorious friend, but pay nothing. All my returns I make to him are ſo little, and ſo much below the obligations I am under, that they are altogether unworthy his notice. O that I could give away to him my whole ſelf forever in one pure, conſtant, ardent flame of love. And even this would be ſo little, worthleſs a gift, that it is great grace and condeſcenſion in him to accept it. If I was called to the greateſt ſufferings in his cauſe, and to lay down my life for him, this I ſhould count the greateſt privilege; but how little would this be towards paying the debt I owe! how little compared with what he has done for me!

There are many profeſſed Chriſtians, who naturally think they do a great deal for Chriſt, and that he is much in debt to them for it; while they are really doing little compared with what many others do. And the very reaſon why they have ſo high an opinion of what they do is, becauſe they count Chriſt's ſervice hard, and at bottom have no true love to him. But the true friends of Chriſt, from the great love they have to him, are diſpoſed to look upon all they can do or ſuffer for him as little or nothing.

5. The friends of Chriſt are ready to eſpouſe his cauſe at all times, let it coſt them what it will.

This is the nature of true friendſhip; it will lead perſons always to appear on the ſide of their friend, to eſpouſe his cauſe, and promote his intereſt. Solomon obſerves, that a friend loveth at all times. This is applicable to the caſe before us: a true friend of Chriſt loveth at all times, is ready to ſtand up in his cauſe, and eſpouſe

eſpouſe his intereſt, let who will oppoſe it. He is not aſhamed of his friend, and will not account his name, eſtate or his life dear to him, if he is called to give any or all of them up, to teſtify his love to Chriſt. He is tenderly affected and hurt when Chriſt is ſlighted and diſhonoured, and will do all he can to wipe off the reproach. And if Chriſt muſt be diſhonoured and reproached, he is willing to ſuffer reproach with him; and deſires not to fare better in the world than Chriſt and his cauſe do.

6. The true friends of Chriſt deſire and long to have others become his friends.

Their benevolence to Chriſt, and to their fellow men, will both influence to this. They want all ſhould love and honour Chriſt, out of love and benevolence to him; and they earneſtly deſire that others may enjoy the happineſs of this friendſhip, as friends to them. Under the influence of this they are praying for others, that they may be brought to know Chriſt, and ſo become his real friends and ſervants. And they are taking all the proper ways they can think of to recommend Chriſt to others, both in words and conduct, by holding forth light, and matter of conviction of his worth and excellence.

7. The true friends to Chriſt know that they are naturally enemies to him, and continue to have a great degree of oppoſition and enmity in their hearts to him, even now.

There are many profeſſed Chriſtians who are inſenſible that they are, or ever were, in any degree real enemies to Chriſt. They think mankind in general, and themſelves in particular, are much miſrepreſented and abuſed, if any one declares them to be naturally enemies to Chriſt. This, we are obliged to think, is owing to their not being real friends to Chriſt. If they were, they could not be ſo inſenſible of that which oppoſes him. It is no wonder that he who is not a friend to Chriſt ſhould be blinded in this matter, and wholly overlook his oppoſition and enmity to Chriſt; but that a true friend to him ſhould be thus blinded is perfectly unaccountable,

unaccountable, and even impoſſible. All ſin is moſt direct oppoſition to Chriſt, and enmity againſt him, whether it be in us or in others. But the Chriſtian world is full of ſin; and all men are naturally wholly given to it, and therefore really hate Chriſt. And even his beſt friends, in this world, have a great degree of corruption, and many ſinful exerciſes of heart. And all this is real enmity to Chriſt, it being not the leſs ſo becauſe they have a degree of love to Chriſt. Therefore it ſeems impoſſible that a friend to Chriſt ſhould be inſenſible of this.

When any one has no true love and friendſhip for another, but greatly undervalues, diſlikes and hates him, and yet imagines he is his true friend, he muſt of conſequence be in a great degree ſtupid and blind to the ſlight and contempt that is caſt upon him, and will naturally think he is treated well enough; and may look upon that as an act of reſpect to him, in which really a ſlight is put upon him, and is an act of enmity againſt his true character. But he who is a true friend to another, and eſteems, honours and loves him to a great degree, for what he is in himſelf, and in a view of his true character, will be quick to diſcern and feel every ſlight that is put upon him, and every thing that oppoſes his character. So it is in this caſe; the true friend of Chriſt knows the whole world lies in wickedneſs, and that all men are naturally in arms againſt Chriſt, and are proclaiming their enmity againſt him; that he himſelf is naturally a rebel and enemy to him; and that there is a great degree of the ſame thing in his heart now, of which he ſhall never be wholly cured, till he is perfectly cured of all ſin. In this view the friends of Chriſt loathe and abhor themſelves, humble themſelves before him, and lie in the duſt at his feet, judging and condemning themſelves, acknowledging their own guilt and ill-deſert, and exceeding vileneſs and odiouſneſs, and feeling themſelves wholly without the leaſt excuſe. They know that the carnal mind, even every thing that is in man naturally, is enmity againſt Chriſt, and that the friendſhip

ſhip of this world is enmity againſt him; that they are no further friends to Chriſt than they are new creatures, having put off the old man with his luſts, and put on the new man: and, O, how do they long for deliverance from this body of ſin and death, to be perfectly like Chriſt, and turned into a pure, holy flame of perfect love to him!

8. The true friends of Chriſt think much of him, and his name is as ointment poured forth, having a ſweetneſs and fragrancy, which often fills their hearts with an holy warmth and fervour, and ſweet, heavenly delight.

Our deareſt friends have always a place in our hearts: we are apt to have them much in our thoughts: every thing about us, and every occurrent, almoſt, will ſuggeſt the idea of them to our minds, which we are apt to carry with us wherever we go.

And ſurely there is ſomething like this in the friendſhip we are conſidering. No perſon has reaſon to think he is a friend to Chriſt, unleſs he thinks much of him, and the pleaſing idea he has formed of him is apt to be preſent, and is familiar to him.

The friend of Chriſt has really more concern with him, than with any other perſon in the univerſe; and more paſſes between him and Chriſt, than between any one elſe. To him his heart naturally goes out, when alone, in exerciſes of love, devotion and prayer; and of him he thinks much, even in company; for none can ſo divert him as to eraſe the ſweet idea of his beſt beloved from his mind. And whatever he does in word or deed, he does all in the name of the Lord Jeſus, giving thanks to God and the Father by him. Chriſt is in him the hope of glory; and the life he lives is a life of faith on the Son of God.

9. The friends of Chriſt do truſt in him wholly for righteouſneſs and ſtrength. They truſt in his merit and worthineſs only, to recommend them ſo as to find acceptance with the Father of the univerſe, and to all that favour they need. They know they have no worthineſs

thineſs of their own, but infinitely the reverſe of it; that they are in themſelves moſt unworthy, odious and ill-deſerving; and they know that Chriſt has merit and worthineſs enough to recommend them; and they ſee wherein it conſiſts. Their knowledge of the true character of Chriſt, and ſenſe of his worthineſs, excellency and amiableneſs, in which their love and friendſhip to him conſiſts, is a ſufficient foundation for their truſt in him to recommend them to the offended Lawgiver. They ſee the reaſon why he is ſo worthy and acceptable to the Father; and do not wonder that he is ready to pardon and ſhew the greateſt favours to thoſe who are his friends, and for whom he has undertaken as their friend and patron, interpoſing and employing his merit and worthineſs in their behalf. They therefore ſee the ſafety there is in relying upon him for this, however unworthy they are in themſelves; that they need nothing but to be united to him, ſo that he ſhall be their friend, and properly eſpouſe their cauſe, in order to have all the favour they want, and to be "*accepted in the Beloved.*" And the higher their love and friendſhip to Chriſt ariſes, and the greater ſenſe they have of his excellency and worthineſs, the more ſtrongly do they rely upon him for righteouſneſs; the more clearly do they ſee the propriety, wiſdom and glory of this way of the ſinner's finding acceptance with God, and with the more cheerfulneſs and delight do they truſt in him, "deſiring to be found in him, not having their own righteouſneſs, which is of the law, but that which is through the faith of Chriſt, the righteouſneſs which is of God by faith." In ſhort, the more they love Chriſt, the more fully do they ſee their deſtitution of all righteouſneſs and worthineſs of their own; yea, the infinite diſtance they are from any ſuch thing, even their infinite vileneſs and ill-deſert; and the more clearly do they behold the ſufficiency of his worthineſs to recommend them; and the more pleaſed are they with being ſaved in this way, as the wiſeſt and moſt ſweet and excellent of any they can imagine.

If

If a perſon wants a favour of any one, which he has forfeited, and of which he is utterly unworthy, having juſtly incurred his higheſt diſpleaſure; and there is another, a third perſon, whom he highly eſteems and loves, and knows he is moſt worthy and acceptable in his eyes whoſe favour he wants; he will naturally deſire that this his beloved friend ſhould eſpouſe his cauſe, and interpoſe the influence and merit he has with the offended perſon, to procure his pardon and favour. And if he knows that this his much eſteemed and moſt dear friend has actually undertaken thus to mediate in the behalf of offenders, and in this work has done much to pleaſe and honour the offended, injured perſon, even enough more than to countervail the injury and damage he had ſuſtained; he will naturally rely wholly upon his merit and worthineſs with the offended perſon, for that acceptance and favour he wants. And his receiving it in this channel, wholly by the interpoſition, merit and worthineſs of his highly eſteemed and well beloved friend, will render it doubly ſweet to him, at the ſame time that it will greatly endear to him his very worthy friend. And hence we may obſerve, that it is agreeable not only to the practice of mankind in ſuch caſes, but to the reaſon and nature of things, that ſuch a friend ſhould, by his merit with the offended perſon, procure pardon and favour to the offender, who applies to him and truſts in him, to do ſuch a kind office for him; and that it may be reaſonable and proper that ſuch a favour ſhould be given him purely out of reſpect to the merit and worthineſs of his friend, to whom he is united, and in whom he truſts for this, which it would not be proper and wiſe to grant in any other way.

Thus the friend of Chriſt ſees that "the Lord is well pleaſed for his righteouſneſs ſake," and ſays, with unſpeakable ſatisfaction and pleaſure, "In the Lord have I righteouſneſs;" yea, with immenſely more pleaſure than the angels have in being accepted in their own righteouſneſs. And the honour and glory that the Mediator, their

their dearest friend, has, by thus becoming the righteousness of his people, and procuring pardon and acceptance for them, is exceeding satisfactory and pleasing to his friends. They are abased and humbled to the lowest degree, and made to take their proper place, in a sense of their own infinite unworthiness and guilt: Christ, their friend, is exalted, as having merit and worthiness with God sufficient to cancel their guilt, and recommend them to the greatest dignity and blessedness. And with this they are well pleased, and rejoice to take their own place, sink down low at the foot of Christ, and to exalt and honour their glorious Friend and Redeemer. And in this way they at the same time exalt and honour themselves in the highest degree.

They who are at heart in no degree friendly to Jesus Christ, never thus trust in him for righteousness; nor can they be reconciled to this method of pardon and salvation. Whatever profession they may make, and however orthodox they are in speculation, they do not really understand this matter; it is foolishness unto them, and their whole hearts do in all their exercises most directly and strongly oppose it; and they are at bottom seeking after righteousness, as it were by the works of the law. The friends of Christ trust wholly in him also for strength, by which they may persevere in love and friendship with him; being sensible that they have no sufficiency of their own, and that there is not the least ground of dependence on themselves. In this sense, they go through this wilderness to the world above, *leaning on their beloved;* knowing that though of themselves they can do nothing, yet through Christ strengthening them they can do all things.

III. Let what has been said on this subject be improved to recommend Jesus Christ to all as the best friend, and as a motive to enter into friendship with him, and make him their friend without delay.

You have been attending to the unspeakable privileges and blessedness of this friendship; you have had enough laid before you abundantly to convince you that

that this is the moſt important and happieſt friendſhip in the univerſe; that they are indeed bleſſed and made happy forever, who are true friends to Jeſus Chriſt. They enjoy a much higher degree of happineſs in this world, than any other perſons ever did, or ever can do.

And you are all now invited into this friendſhip, who have hitherto lived ſtrangers to it; you are none of you excluded; but Chriſt is offered to you all in the character of an almighty and moſt excellent friend; and nothing is wanting but the free conſent of your hearts to give yourſelves up to him, in this character, become friends to him, cleave to him, and love him, in order to his being your friend. You cannot fail of having him your friend but by rejecting the moſt kind offer he makes to you. If therefore any under the goſpel periſh at laſt for want of an all-ſufficient friend, who is able and ready to do all for them they can want, even in the moſt extreme caſe, and is infinitely the beſt, moſt ſweet and excellent friend in the univerſe; it muſt be becauſe they have perſiſted through their whole life in refuſing his kind offer to be their friend, and preſſing invitations, urged by the ſtrongeſt motives imaginable, to chooſe him as their friend.

All that has been ſaid on this intereſting, pleaſing ſubject conſpires to ſhew the folly and miſery of ſuch. But to all this a few words more may be added, in an addreſs to ſuch who have hitherto rejected this Heavenly Friend.

Conſider how happy they muſt be who have entered into this friendſhip; who love, and are beloved by, ſuch an infinitely excellent and amiable friend. Much has been ſaid in the preceding diſcourſes to ſet forth the happineſs of ſuch. But the particular conſideration which is ſuited to lead you to conceive of this matter, is, the happineſs of other friendſhips; at leaſt the happineſs which men are eagerly ſeeking and purſuing in them.

The blooming, ſprightly youth commonly ſets out ſoon in the eager purſuit of happineſs, in love and friend-

ſhip. For this he has the moſt keen taſte, and can conceive of no higher enjoyment than this. To love and be beloved by a friend which he ſhall chooſe out from all the reſt of mankind, and prefer to all the reſt, to enjoy ſuch a friend in the moſt agreeable circumſtances, is the height of all felicity in his view. And even the hope and proſpect of it will give a degree of high enjoyment, ſuch as it is, and prompt him to go through almoſt any difficulty and hardſhip, in order to be united with and enjoy ſuch a friend.

Your obſervation and experience with reſpect to this may ſerve to convince you of the exalted happineſs of the friendſhip I am inviting you into. What are all the excellencies and charms, either of body or mind, of the moſt lovely perſons on earth, compared with thoſe of Jeſus Chriſt! You want nothing but a taſte and reliſh for his beauties, in order to lower your reliſh for all mere human friendſhips, and to make you long for *real* enjoyment in the moſt noble and ſubſtantial friendſhip: and the higheſt enjoyment of earthly lovers (to obtain which they would be willing to give away all the riches of both the Indies) would appear to you to be mean traſh; a low, deſpicable, fading nothing. They who, in a high taſte for friendſhip, are purſuing happineſs in earthly loves, are always diſappointed in a greater or leſs degree. Either they never get poſſeſſion of the beloved object, or, if they do, they find not thoſe excellencies they expected, having greatly overrated them in their imaginations; or the enjoyment does not anſwer their expectations; and the happineſs they find is ſhort-lived, and attended with many troubles and undeſirable things, and ſoon dies away. And often the ſhort-lived comfort gives place to a keen and laſting miſery, which leaves the poor creature in abſolute deſpair of that happineſs which had been expected, and ſo eagerly ſought after. But in the friendſhip now propoſed to you, your higheſt expectations ſhall be immenſely outdone. The enjoyment of your friend ſhall not fade, but increaſe. You will find his

his beauty and excellency greater than you conceived; and that the one half was not told you. You shall exist in the bloom and vigour of eternal youth. Your taste for love and friendship shall not die, but increase, and be a thousand times as high and keen as that of the most passionate, doating earthly lover: and this shall be completely satisfied in the enjoyment of your beloved, under all imaginable advantages, and with every desirable circumstance, while his beauties shall sparkle in your eyes, and more and more charm, and fill you with unutterable transports of the most solid and lasting joy, and he will give himself wholly to you forever.

O let them who have a high relish for earthly love and friendship improve this to help their conceptions of the happiness of the love and friendship now recommended; and let them hence be excited to seek after this enjoyment, by choosing Jesus Christ as their friend. Let them know that it is only because their taste is vitiated and perverted, that they are not pursuing this love with as much eagerness and high expectation as the fond youth is hurried on in earthly amours.

And let the *youth*, in particular, be invited into this friendship. It is pity the morning of your days, the bloom and vigour of life, should be spent in the eager pursuit of that which will not profit, but end in disappointment and misery. It is pity you should not give yourselves up to Jesus Christ, the heavenly friend, in your early days, and let him have your first love. He is calling upon you to give your hearts to him, in this noble and exalted friendship. You shall find all the sweetness in this that you expect, and are pursuing elsewhere, and ten thousand times more. And this shall sweeten all other friendships to you, that are worthy to be desired and pursued. This will lay a foundation for a virtuous, noble friendship with others, which shall grow more and more refined and sweet, and shall end in something happy and glorious, beyond all our present conceptions.

Again,

Again, consider the base ingratitude and wickedness there is in slighting and rejecting the offers of this friendship with Jesus Christ, and the dreadful consequence of it. If you do not enjoy all the blessings of this friendship, it will be wholly your own fault, and the consequence will be unutterable misery. You must answer for the wickedness you are guilty of in rejecting Christ, which is in proportion to his greatness, worthiness and excellence, his kindness and love, and the happiness you hereby refuse. You are spurning at, and trampling upon, the most tender love, of the most worthy and excellent personage, who offers to receive you into the embraces of the dearest love. And O, what will be the consequence of this! Why, Christ, the great and celebrated friend, who now offers to take you into a dear and everlasting friendship, and become your most loving friend forever, if you will consent to it, will become your peculiar and greatest enemy; yea, your implacable enemy forever. He will hate you, and heap mischiefs on your head, without the least degree of pity or regard to your interest. He will cast you into outer darkness, and tread you down in his wrath, and trample you in his fury. His hatred, wrath and vengeance towards you will be great and dreadful in proportion to his love and kindness to his friends. And all his friends will most heartily join with him in this; and not one of them will exercise the least love and pity towards you. All your friendships you are entering into and pursuing now, will wholly cease soon, and turn into the most tormenting hatred and enmity. The higher your love and friendship with others rises, which is consistent with your being enemies to Christ, and the more connections you have with such, the greater enemies and plagues will you be to one another forever. And the time will soon come when you shall know you have not a friend in the universe, and that you yourself know not, nor ever will know, what true friendship means; being justly cursed, and given up to an unfriendly heart, full of pride, hatred, envy, malice, revenge,

venge, curſing and bitterneſs, in conſequence of your refuſal to enter into a friendſhip with Jeſus Chriſt. Conſider how hard and cutting it is now to be hated, and have the ill will of others, and find yourſelf friendleſs when in calamity and diſtreſs, and you ſtand in need of help; and let this teach you a little what you muſt feel if you ever come to the caſe juſt deſcribed. And as you would avoid all this evil, of which we can have but a faint idea now, be perſuaded to attend to the moſt kind offer which Chriſt makes to you. O run, *fly* into his arms, which are now ſtretched out to you, and he will embrace you forever. Are you in the utmoſt danger of ſinking into hell, his almighty, everlaſting arms ſhall be underneath you, to hold you up, and raiſe you to the higheſt heavens. Are you moſt miſerable and wretched, run to Chriſt, and he will deliver you out of all trouble, and effectually ſecure you from all evil; yea, he will turn evil into good, and bring the greateſt good to you out of the greateſt calamity and evil. He is, in the moſt eminent ſenſe, the friend and brother who was *born for adverſity*. He is able and ready to help in the moſt adverſe, evil caſe, where no other friend can help and deliver. This is his peculiar work, and which is his glory." He is anointed to preach the goſpel to the poor, to bind up the broken hearted, to preach deliverance to the captives, and recovering of ſight to the blind; to ſet at liberty thoſe that are bruiſed, to comfort all that mourn, to give unto them beauty for aſhes, the oil of joy for mourning, the garment of praiſe for the ſpirit of heavineſs.

O, how much do you want ſuch a friend as this! How miſerable muſt you be without him! What a comfort will ſuch a friend be in the various calamities in this life! His name is as a ſtrong tower: the righteous, his true friends, run into it, and are ſafe. How much will you want ſuch a friend, when you come to die! one who has conquered death, and taken away his ſting, and turned him into a friend to his people: and over

over ſuch the *ſecond death* ſhall have no power. What have you to object againſt entering into this friendſhip without delay? Have you any objections againſt Chriſt, as not being ſuch an one as you want and deſire? O, let not one of you ſay ſo! How ſhall we bear to have our deareſt and moſt excellent friend thus ſpoken againſt, and ſet at nought! O ye friends of Chriſt, do not your hearts bleed when your beſt beloved friend is thus contemned and wounded! And do you not pity theſe poor, deluded creatures, who are thus abuſing the kindeſt friend of ſinners, to their own eternal ruin! Surely this is the language of your hearts, O ſinners! You have a thouſand objections againſt him. He has in your eyes no form nor comelineſs, no beauty, that you ſhould deſire him; therefore he is deſpiſed and rejected by you.

Or do you object againſt yourſelves, as too mean, guilty and unworthy to be received and loved by ſuch a friend, ſo that it would be preſumption in you to think of entering into ſuch a near union and friendſhip with him? This objection is altogether groundleſs: was it not ſo, he never would have admitted one of the fallen race into this happy, high and noble friendſhip; for this objection, if it were one, lies with infinite weight and ſtrength againſt them all. Do you find that Chriſt has any where made this objection againſt any, in his word? Surely no! ſo far from this, that he has done and ſaid every thing he poſſibly could, to ſhew that this is not the leaſt objection with him, and never did, nor ever will, make it againſt the moſt vile, guilty wretch among mankind, who is willing to be his friend, and chooſes him for his friend and redeemer. Your guilt, vileneſs and miſery will be many ways an advantage to this peculiar friendſhip, as has been ſhewn; and will be ſo far from being a diſhonour to this glorious Friend of ſinners, though he take you into the neareſt and deareſt relation and friendſhip with himſelf, that it will turn greatly to his honour and glory. Let this

then

then rather be an argument with you to give yourſelves up to him without delay, as your almighty, wonderful, excellent friend.

IV. Let the profeſſed friends of Jeſus Chriſt be hence led ſeriouſly to conſider their diſtinguiſhing privileges, and high and peculiar obligations. Your profeſſion and calling is a holy, high and heavenly one indeed. How amazingly dreadful to be found at laſt, after all your profeſſion and hopes, thoſe to whom Chriſt will ſay, "I never knew you: Depart from me, ye workers of iniquity!" O give all diligence to make your calling and election ſure. Cleave to this infinitely excellent and glorious friend with your whole hearts, and in all your ways. O love him, and he will love you; he will manifeſt himſelf unto you, in all the wonders of his love and grace; he will come unto you, and take up his abode with you. Shall the friends of Chriſt ſuffer themſelves to get at a diſtance from him, and let their hearts ſink down into a great degree of indifference and coldneſs towards him! Shall they cleave and bow down to ſome other friend, which courts their affections! Shall they turn away from him, and ſeek to make friendſhip with this world, which is enmity againſt Chriſt? If there are any ſuch, they may with great propriety be addreſſed in the words of Abſalom to Huſhai: "Is this thy kindneſs to thy friend! Why wenteſt thou not with thy friend?" What fault have you found in him, that you treat him ſo? Are you not, in a ſenſe, betraying him into the hands of his enemies? Shall he be thus wounded in the houſe of his profeſſed friends!

Oh hearken to his ſweet and charming voice, while he calls to you in ſuch melting language as this: "Look unto me, my ſpouſe, from the lion's dens, from the mountains of the leopards. Return unto me, for I am married unto you. Hearken, O daughter, and incline thine ear; forget alſo thine own people, and thy father's houſe; ſo ſhall the king greatly deſire thy beauty: for he is thy Lord, and worſhip thou him." O, if you have

have a ſpark of true love and friendſhip for him, how can you forbear ſaying, and reſolving with your whole heart, "I will go and return to my firſt huſband, for then it was better with me than now." Take with you words, and turn to the Lord, your Friend and Redeemer: ſay unto him, "Take away all our iniquity, and receive us graciouſly into thy favour, and the moſt kind embraces of thy love: ſo will we render thee our whole ſouls in the moſt ardent love, gratitude and praiſe." He will then heal your backſlidings, and love you freely.

Let the dear friends of Chriſt hold faſt their profeſſion without wavering, and follow on to know the Lord. Cleave to him, let it coſt you what it will; and hold yourſelves in readineſs to part with all, even your own lives, for him. If ye ſuffer in his cauſe, as his friends and followers, happy are ye. Bleſſed are ye when men ſhall revile you, and perſecute you, and ſay all manner of evil againſt you falſely, for his ſake. Rejoice, and be exceeding glad, for great is your reward in heaven. If there be therefore any conſolation in Chriſt, if any comfort of love, if any fellowſhip of the Spirit, if any bowels and mercies, fulfil ye my joy, that ye be like minded, having the ſame love to Chriſt and to one another. If ye be indeed riſen with Chriſt, ſeek thoſe things which are above, where Chriſt ſitteth at the right hand of God. Set your affection on things above, not on things on the earth: and when Chriſt, the chief ſhepherd and your friend, ſhall appear, you ſhall appear with him in glory; and ye ſhall receive a crown of everlaſting glory, and reign with him in his kingdom forever. AMEN.

SERMON

# Sermon IX.

WRITTEN IN THE YEAR 1798.

Phil. ii. 12, 13. *Work out your own salvation with fear and trembling: for it is God who worketh in you, both to will and to do, of his good pleasure.*

IT is proposed to explain, illustrate and improve this passage of holy scripture with a view to promote the knowledge and practice of those exercises and duties in which real Christianity consists, and by which it is distinguished from all counterfeits.

In order to this, the following things must be attended to, and with care distinctly examined.

I. What is meant by Christians working out their own salvation, and in what this work consists.

II. What is meant by doing this with fear and trembling.

III. What is to be understood by God's working in them, both to will and to do, of his good pleasure.

IV. Wherein, and in what respects, this affords a reason and motive to enforce the foregoing exhortation, expressed by the particle FOR, by which the sentence is introduced: *For* it is God who worketh in you, &c.

V. Improve the subject to practical purposes.

I. We are to consider and shew what is intended and implied in Christians working out their own salvation. For it must be observed, and kept in mind, while attending to this subject, that the Apostle is here, and in the whole of this epistle, addressing none but those whom he considers to be real Christians, "saints in Christ Jesus;" [chap. i. verse 1;] in whom God had begun a good work, which he would perform until the day of Jesus Christ; [*v.* 6;] who not only believed on

Chriſt, but alſo ſuffered for his ſake, [*v.* 29,] and had always obeyed Chriſt ſince they firſt believed: [chap. ii. 12.]

By ſalvation we are to underſtand, eternal life, which conſiſts in deliverance from ſin and all evil, and being made perfectly holy and happy in the enjoyment and favour of God in his eternal kingdom. This is the hope which Chriſtians are called by Chriſt to conſider and purſue; the prize ſet up before them, for which they are commanded to run.

The Chriſtian worketh out this as his own ſalvation, by avoiding and renouncing every thing which is in the way of obtaining it, and would effectually prevent it, if it were not given up and rejected; by ſurmounting and overcoming all the oppoſition and difficulties which would retard and obſtruct him in his work; by his faithfully performing all thoſe exerciſes, duties and works which are included in the life of a Chriſtian, and neceſſary in order to his ſalvation.

When a perſon is truly converted, and becomes a real Chriſtian, a true diſciple of Chriſt, he then *begins* this great work, which is not finiſhed till he leaves this ſtate of trial, and paſſes into the unſeen world by death. This is the moſt noble and important work, as well as the greateſt and moſt difficult, in which any of the children of men can engage; and, as will appear before we have finiſhed the ſubject, infinitely too great, and altogether impoſſible, to be performed by fallen man, unleſs ſtrengthened and carried through it by the power and grace of the mighty Redeemer.

This work of Chriſtians is repreſented and deſcribed in the ſcripture by a variety of expreſſions and metaphors, too many to be here particularly enumerated. It will be ſufficient for the preſent purpoſe to mention the following.

Our Saviour ſpeaks of this work in the following words: "And he ſaid unto them all, if any man will come after me, let him deny himſelf, and take up his croſs daily, and follow me." The apoſtle Paul deſcribes this work of a Chriſtian by telling how he worked out his

his own ſalvation: "And herein do I exerciſe myſelf, to have always a conſcience void of offence, toward God and toward men. I follow after, that I may apprehend that for which alſo I am apprehended by Chriſt Jeſus. I count not myſelf to have apprehended: but this one thing I do, forgetting the things which are behind, and reaching forth unto thoſe things which are before, I preſs toward the mark, for the prize of the high calling of God in Chriſt Jeſus. I have fought a good fight, I have finiſhed my courſe, I have kept the faith. Henceforth there is laid up for me a crown of righteouſneſs."

Jeſus Chriſt repreſents this work by a warfare, in which the ſoldiers follow their general to battles and ſieges, in which they reſolutely preſs forward to conqueſt. He ſays, "the kingdom of heaven ſuffereth violence, and the violent take it by force." And this is repeatedly repreſented by the ſame thing in the Revelation, where he often promiſes ſalvation to him who *overcometh*.

The apoſtle Paul repreſents the work of a Chriſtian by thoſe who ſtrive for the maſtery over thoſe who oppoſed and fought againſt them; and who ran in a race, in order to obtain a crown, in the midſt of a number of competitors: "Know ye not that they who run in a race run all, but one receiveth the prize? So run, that ye may obtain. And every man who ſtriveth for the maſtery is temperate in all things. Now they do this to obtain a corruptible crown, but we an incorruptible." And he deſcribes the ſame work in the following paſſages: "God will render to every man according to his deeds: to them who by patient continuance in well-doing ſeek for glory, and honour, and immortality, eternal life. Therefore, my beloved brethren, be ye ſtedfaſt, unmoveable, always abounding in the work of the Lord, foraſmuch as ye know that your labour is not in vain in the Lord. But thou, O man of God, flee theſe things; and follow after righteouſneſs, godlineſs, faith, love, patience, meekneſs. Fight the good fight of faith, lay hold on eternal life."

But,

But, in order to give a more particular and full deſcription of this work, and ſhew what is implied in it, that every one may be in ſome meaſure ſenſible of the greatneſs and difficulty of it, this ſubject requires yet further attention, and more clear illuſtration from what is ſaid of it in the holy ſcripture. This will be attempted under the following heads.

*Firſt.* In working out their own ſalvation perſons muſt avoid, forſake and renounce every way or practice of known and allowed ſin.

The ſcripture teaches us that the allowed practice of any one way of known ſin is not the way to heaven, but will certainly exclude men from ſalvation, though they ſhould avoid all other ways of ſinning, and whatever pains they may take in doing many things, and though they may make a high profeſſion of godlineſs, and appear to have a great religious zeal. The apoſtle John ſays, "Whoſoever abideth in him (that is in Chriſt) ſinneth not: whoſoever ſinneth, hath not ſeen him, neither known him. He that committeth ſin is of the devil. Whoſoever is born of God doth not commit ſin." He does not mean that he does in no ſenſe ſin, and is perfectly free from all ſin; for this would be a direct contradiction to what he had before aſſerted, viz. "If we ſay we have no ſin, we deceive ourſelves, and the truth is not in us." By ſinning and committing ſin is therefore meant, living in the allowed practice of any known ſin, or omiſſion of any known duty. "They who are Chriſt's have crucified the fleſh, with the affections and luſts." The goſpel teaches them to deny *all* ungodlineſs, and *every* worldly luſt, as the only way to obtain ſalvation. They who are working out their own ſalvation "are undefiled in their way, they do no iniquity, and have reſpect to *all* God's commandments."

They muſt not only avoid all groſsly ſinful actions, and live what is called a ſober and regular life, but they muſt ſo govern their tongues as carefully to avoid every ſinful and even idle word. The command is, "Let no corrupt

corrupt communication proceed out of your mouth, but that which is good, to the uſe of edifying, that it may miniſter grace unto the hearers:" [*Eph.* iv. 29.] And it is declared by the higheſt authority, that "for every idle word that men ſhall ſpeak, they ſhall give account thereof in the day of judgment:" [*Matth.* xii. 36.] And an apoſtle ſays, "If any man ſeem to be religious, and bridleth not his tongue, this man's religion is vain:" [*Jam.* i. 26.]

And they muſt watch againſt, avoid and ſuppreſs all ſinful, vain and idle thoughts and imaginations in their own hearts. They muſt keep their hearts with all diligence, and not ſuffer any vain thoughts to lodge within them. They muſt oppoſe, fight againſt and mortify every luſt, every ſinful motion, diſpoſition or inclination in their heart, and not indulge any vain imaginations. The heart is the ſeat and fountain of every thing which is ſinful. Out of the heart proceed evil *thoughts*, and every ſin which is brought forth into practice, in words and actions. All moral evil which is or has been in the world originates in the heart. The Chriſtian therefore has a conſtant, great and difficult work to do in keeping his own heart, in watching againſt and ſtriving to ſuppreſs every thought and motion which is contrary to the holy law of God, which has a primary reſpect to the heart, and, by requiring every thought and exerciſe of it to be holy, forbids every motion and thought which is not conformable to this holy law.

Under this head it will be needful to be more particular.

1. All ſelfiſh, covetous thoughts and affections muſt be oppoſed and ſuppreſſed. A ſelfiſh diſpoſition, and all ſelfiſh thoughts, are covetouſneſs, in the moſt proper and extenſive ſenſe of the word. And this diſpoſition of the heart is the root and ſource of all ſin, or of every thing wrong in the hearts and lives of men, or of all that is forbidden in the law of God. Therefore St. Paul ſpeaks of covetouſneſs as comprehending all ſin, which

which is forbidden in the law of God, in the following words: "I had not known sin but by the law: for I had not known lust except the law had said, *Thou shalt not covet:*" [*Rom.* vii. 7.] It hence appears that a covetous spirit is directly opposed to what the law of God requires; and this with the fruits of it is all that is forbidden. Selfishness seeks her own wholly, and nothing else; and therefore is directly contrary to that holy, disinterested benevolent love, which the law of God requires, and which the Apostle says "seeketh not her own." Man is naturally wholly under the power of this selfishness in all his thoughts and actions; and the Christian has as much of this in his heart, as he has of sin; and to be delivered from every degree of selfish thoughts and affections, will complete his salvation. Therefore, in working out his own salvation, he must seek deliverance from this giant, *selfishness*, and watch and oppose all the motions of it, which will intrude itself and mix with every thought and exercise of the heart, and strive for the dominion, and that in a secret and unperceived way, putting on the appearance of benevolence and goodness, not to be discovered and detected but by the discerning mind, which is constantly on the watch against it.

This selfishness implies all other evil thoughts, as it is the root of all sin, as has been observed; but as these evil thoughts are ranked under different names, as they respect diverse objects, and produce a variety of dissimilar actions, it is proper to consider them under distinct heads according to their particular names, in order to give a more clear and full view of the thoughts and affections which the Christian must oppose and mortify, in order to work out his own salvation.

2. Christians must watch against and oppose all proud thoughts, or the pride of their own hearts, would they work out their own salvation. Pride is selfishness, or a fruit of it, which consists in a disposition to exalt self, and induces persons to think more highly of themselves than they ought to think. Against such thoughts

thoughts the apoſtle Paul cautions Chriſtians, and commands them to ſuppreſs and extinguiſh them: "I ſay to every man who is among you, not to think of himſelf more highly than he ought to think:" [*Rom.* xii. 3.] Our Saviour frequently inculcated the neceſſity of mortifying pride, and putting on humility, in order to be ſaved. He repeatedly ſaid that he who exalteth himſelf ſhall be abaſed, and he who humbleth himſelf ſhall be exalted. The apoſtles commanded men to humble themſelves in the ſight of God, as the only way to favour, and directed Chriſtians to be clothed with humility.

Fallen man is naturally under the dominion of ſelfiſhneſs and pride. He is exceeding proud; by which all his thoughts, words and actions are governed, even when he puts on the appearance and pretence of humility. This his pride is moſt unreaſonable, and the ſource of conſtant unhappineſs; while there is the higheſt reaſon for the deepeſt humiliation, in a view and ſenſe of the infinite odiouſneſs of his character and conduct, and his unſpeakable guilt and miſery, being the object of the high diſpleaſure and awful curſe of his Maker. But it is always true that the more reaſon men have for humility, and the more unreaſonable their pride is, their pride is proportionably greater, and their hearts are more ſtrongly oppoſed to humbling themſelves. It is the nature of pride to hide itſelf from the perſon who has it; and he who has the moſt of it is the fartheſt from being ſenſible that he has any pride. And he only ſees his own pride in any degree of true light in whoſe heart the power of it ſo far broken as to exerciſe a degree of true humility; which is true of every Chriſtian. And even he is far from ſeeing the whole of his pride, and it often deceives him. It dwells in a great meaſure unſeen in his heart; and it mixes itſelf with all his thoughts, and is gratified in words and actions, while it is not directly perceived, and is called, it may be, by ſome good name, and even looked upon to be real humility.

Pride

Pride has different objects, and supports and exerciſes itſelf in ways and by means innumerable. It is exerciſed towards God, ſo far as he comes into view, in mean, degrading thoughts of the Moſt High, and high and exalting thoughts of ſelf; in haughty ſtubbornneſs to his authority, and diſobedience to his law; in ſetting a high value on his own exerciſes, which he calls religious, ſo as to be confident they are highly pleaſing to his Maker, &c. &c. It is exerciſed, as it reſpects men and himſelf, in a manner and ways too many to be enumerated here.

The goſpel is levelled directly againſt the pride of man, and is calculated to exalt God, and abaſe man; ſo that none but thoſe who humble themſelves in the ſight of the Lord can approve of the way of ſalvation by Chriſt, or go one ſtep in it. Every true Chriſtian has thus humbled himſelf; ſo that the dominion of pride is broken in his heart. He has come to Chriſt, and taken his yoke upon himſelf, and learned of him who is meek and lowly in heart; and walks humbly with God, and before men, in a view and ſenſe of his own vile, odious character, his unworthineſs, littleneſs and ill-deſert before God, and his abſolute dependence on him, of whom he has the higheſt, moſt exalted and honourable thoughts. He delights to abaſe himſelf, and exalt the Lord, truſting wholly to the atonement and righteouſneſs of the Redeemer for pardon and acceptance with God. But the Chriſtian is far from deliverance from all pride. He has a degree of true humility, and in the light of this diſcovers his own pride, as he never did before, which appears to him to be exceeding odious; and the many inſtances of the exerciſe of it, which he ſees in his own heart and practice, are made the occaſion of promoting his humility, and of humbling him in his own eyes. And it requires conſtant watchfulneſs and exertion of a Chriſtian to fight againſt, ſuppreſs and mortify the pride of his own heart, in which he is working out his own ſalvation; for he cannot be ſaved in any other way, nor until all his pride be ſlain, and he is completely delivered from it.

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All this is illuſtrated in the inſtance of king Hezekiah. He was a good man, and had been truly humbled; and reſolved to walk ſoftly and humbly all his days. But on a certain occaſion he was led aſtray by his own pride and vanity of mind, which was not perceived by him in the time of his gratifying it. His ſinful heart deceived him, and was lifted up in pride. But when this was diſcovered to him, he humbled himſelf for the pride of his heart; as it proved the occaſion of his ſeeing more clearly than before all that was in his depraved heart: [ſee 2 *Chron.* xxxii. 25, 26, 31; *Iſai.* xxxviii. 15.]

3. The Chriſtian, in working out his own ſalvation, has to watch againſt all anger, wrath, bitterneſs, envy, and malevolence, even in the thoughts and motions of his heart. All theſe are implied in ſelfiſhneſs and pride, and are the genuine offſpring and fruit of thoſe evil diſpoſitions, which, being indulged and gratified, produce all the angry clamours, contentions, fightings, wars, murders, and the various kinds of injuries, unrighteouſneſs and oppreſſions, which take place among mankind. The Chriſtian, from the remaining depravity of his heart, and the many, various and daily temptations, injuries and provocations, is in conſtant danger of having ſome or all of theſe evil thoughts and motions riſe in his heart, and of indulging them in a ſinful degree. He muſt therefore keep up a continual watch and fight againſt all theſe; conſtantly endeavouring to guard himſelf againſt them, that he may avoid or ſuppreſs them in their firſt motions, and prevent their breaking forth into words and actions. And without this he cannot work out his own ſalvation. In order to be ſaved he muſt mortify all theſe, and endeavour to cultivate an unruffled, calm, patient, meek and quiet ſpirit, and live in the exerciſe of that benevolence of heart which is contrary to anger, wrath, envy and malice, and will ſuppreſs and root them out. The apoſtle James therefore ſays to profeſſing Chriſtians, "If ye have bitter envying and ſtrife *in your hearts*, glory not, and lie not againſt the

truth. This wisdom descendeth not from above, but is earthly, sensual, devilish:" [*Jam.* 3, 14, 15.] And the apostle Paul says to such, "Let all bitterness, and wrath, and anger, and clamour, and evil speaking, be put away from you, with all malice:" [*Eph.* 4. 31.]

4. Would Christians work out their own salvation, they must not indulge, but avoid and suppress, a worldly dispositon and affections. All men are naturally of the earth and earthly. They love the world, and seek a worldly good as their portion: they set their hearts and affections on the things of this world: they speak of the world, and therefore think much of it, and take their greatest and only pleasure in the pursuits and enjoyments of this world. The Christian is no longer of this world, but has renounced it as his portion, and chosen that which is infinitely better. But as he has still a degree of a worldly disposition, and is surrounded with worldly objects, and must have much concern with them, they are constantly courting his affection, he is continually in danger of being led astray, and setting his affection on things on the earth. It therefore requires constant care, watchfulness and exertion in order to guard against, and suppress and mortify, all worldly affection, in the exercise of that faith which overcometh the world, and leads the soul to set its whole affection on things which are above, and not on things on the earth, and to keep the heart from a sinful love of the world and the things of the world. Salvation is to be obtained in no other way but this, by which Christians are more and more weaned from this world, and have their conversation in heaven. The cares of this world, and the deceitfulness of riches and the pleasures of this life, being indulged, choke the word, and it becometh unfruitful. Therefore the Christian in working out his own salvation must follow the direction of Jesus Christ, who said to his disciples, "Take heed to yourselves, watch and pray always, lest, *at any time*, your hearts be overcharged with surfeiting and drunkenness, and the cares of this life:" [*Luke* xxi. 34, 36.]

5. The

5. The Chriſtian's working out his own ſalvation implies a keeping in ſubjection and mortifying all inordinate bodily ſenſual appetites and luſts. Theſe appetites are given to men to anſwer good and important purpoſes, while in the body in this world; but become a temptation to innumerable indulgences, which are hurtful and criminal, and are inconſiſtent with the goſpel ſalvation; for they who live after the fleſh ſhall die. In this reſpect therefore every Chriſtian muſt crucify the fleſh with the affections and luſts, and mortify their members which are upon the earth; fornication, uncleanneſs, inordinate affection, and evil concupiſcence. They muſt keep under their bodies, and bring them into ſubjection, as the only way to eſcape deſtruction. They muſt avoid the practice of gluttony, rioting and drunkenneſs, and all chambering and wantonneſs; and make no proviſion for the fleſh, to fulfil the luſts thereof; but purge themſelves from all theſe, that they may be veſſels unto honour, ſanctified and meet for their Maſter's uſe; knowing that their bodies are temples of the Holy Ghoſt.

Thus, to keep the body under, and regulate and govern all the inclinations and appetites of it, and occaſioned by it, requires great and conſtant care and watchfulneſs, and ſtrong reſolution and fortitude of mind, and is no ſmall part of the work of a Chriſtian.

6. The Chriſtian cannot work out his own ſalvation unleſs he croſſes and ſtrives againſt an indolent, ſlothful diſpoſition, which is natural to man, and prevalent in him with reſpect to all thoſe things and actions which reſpect his ſalvation, and are neceſſary in order to it. Hence have been invented innumerable excuſes and pleas in favour of ſitting ſtill, and neglecting thoſe exertions and duties which are neceſſary to be performed in order to ſalvation, which are too many to be mentioned here. Chriſtians are expoſed to be infeſted and retarded in their work, by giving way to this ſlothful diſpoſition, which is moſt contrary to the work they have to do. This requires their whole time, and conſtant zealous exertions, in which they muſt not be ſlothful, but fervent

in ſpirit, ſerving the Lord. The Chriſtian muſt therefore improve every opportunity, and all his advantages, diligently working while his day laſts. To ſit ſtill in indolence and ſloth, is really to go backwards. In doing this work the Chriſtian muſt do as the apoſtle Paul did; he attended to this one buſineſs; forgetting thoſe things which were behind, i.e. his former indolence in, and deviations from, the way of truth, he reached forth to thoſe things which were before, he preſſed toward the mark, for the prize of the high calling of God in Chriſt Jeſus.

7. The work of a Chriſtian conſiſts much in watching and guarding againſt, ſuppreſſing and overcoming, the unbelief of his heart, and all unbelieving thoughts.

Faith is neceſſary to ſalvation; and they who are ſaved live by faith, and perſevere in believing to the ſaving of their ſouls. The Iſraelites were excluded from entering into the land of Canaan by their unbelief; and the ſcripture teaches us that unbelief under the goſpel will as effectually exclude men from heaven: "He who believeth not ſhall not ſee life, but the wrath of God abideth on him, and he ſhall be damned."

Believing and unbelief, as they reſpect divine revelation or the goſpel, do not mean merely the ſpeculative judgment or concluſion of mind reſpecting the truth or falſehood of the goſpel, or of any particular doctrines or facts which relate to inviſible things. Two perſons may be convinced in their judgment that there is good evidence that the goſpel is from heaven, and agree in their ſpeculative ſentiments in the doctrines which are revealed; and yet one of them may be a true believer, in the ſcriptural ſenſe of believing, and the other an unbeliever. This will be according to the diſpoſition and exerciſes of their hearts, with reſpect to the goſpel, and the truths which it contains. If the heart of one of them has no reliſh for theſe truths, and love to them, but diſlikes and is diſpleaſed with them, ſo that they are not cordially embraced as good and excellent, he has no true diſcerning reſpecting them, and does not ſee them

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to be what they really are, and is not a believer, in the ſcripture and proper ſenſe of believing. The other has ſuch a taſte and diſpoſition of mind, that he reliſhes theſe truths, and receives them with cordial approbation and love. He ſees them in a light of which the other has no apprehenſion or idea, and he feels them to be great and important realities, true, excellent and good; and they have ſuch an influence and power on his heart as to excite ſtrong affections, and govern him in all his exerciſes and conduct. This is a true believer. His faith is as different from that of the former, as light is from darkneſs; as powerful ſenſibility of heart, with ſtrong exerciſes of affection and love, are from inſenſibility and hardneſs of heart, and real diſlike of the truth, and averſion from it.

True faith, or a real belief of the truths of the goſpel, is of a moral nature, and therefore has its foundation and ſeat in the heart; ſo that exerciſe of heart is neceſſarily implied in it, and eſſential to it; for every thing of a moral nature belongs to the heart, and that in which no diſpoſition or exerciſe of the heart is implied, has nothing of a moral nature, and is neither good nor evil in a moral ſenſe, i. e. neither virtue nor vice, which is true of every thing in the mind which conſiſts in mere ſpeculation. Therefore we find that believing and unbelief, as they reſpect the goſpel, are repreſented in ſcripture as belonging to the heart, and an exerciſe of that: "*With the heart* man believeth unto righteouſneſs, and with the mouth confeſſion is made unto ſalvation. If thou believeſt *with all thine heart*, thou mayeſt. Take heed, brethern, leſt there be in any of you *an evil heart of unbelief*, in departing from the living God."

It appears from the paſſage of ſcripture laſt mentioned, not only that unbelief belongs to the heart, and, being ſeated there, is moral evil; but that profeſſing Chriſtians are ſo expoſed to the influence of an unbelieving heart, that it concerns them to take heed to themſelves, and be on their watch and guard againſt the prevalency of this evil in their hearts. And indeed all true

Chriſtians have as much of this unbelief in their hearts as they have of moral depravity or ſin. Their faith is comparatavely ſmall, and as a grain of muſtard ſeed. It does exiſt and increaſes ſo far as their hearts are purified, and they grow in grace. Yet they are more ſenſible of the awful degree of unbelief in their hearts, than any other perſons are or can be, and ſee the evil nature and hatefulneſs of it.

This unbelief does not conſiſts ſo much in ſpeculatively queſtioning the truth of divine revelation, and doubting of the truths contained in it, as the want of ſenſibly feeling theſe truths in their reality, excellence and importance, and not being properly affected with them. All this is unbelief, which no conviction which is merely ſpeculative, or any light and evidence which can be offered, by any external means and revelation or inſtructions, will remove, as it is properly *hardneſs of heart*. But it may, and often does, prejudice and blind the ſpeculative underſtanding, ſo as at leaſt to weaken the evidence of truth in ſpeculation, and occaſion ſpeculative doubts about it; and is the cauſe of all that unbelief in ſpeculation which takes place in the Chriſtian world; this being not for want of external light and matter of conviction, but from the blindneſs and moral diſorders of the heart.

The true Chriſtian is ſenſible of this, and that he has that inſenſibility of heart to divine truth, and that darkneſs and blindneſs, which is not owing to any want of light and evidence which is ſet before him, but to the ſtupidity, hardneſs and moral depravity of his heart, which will reſiſt the greateſt light and matter of conviction that can be ſet before him, and the ſtrongeſt mere ſpeculative conviction of his judgment, and would lead to renounce in ſpeculation all the evidence of the truth of divine revelation, were he given up of God to the power and prevalence of a reprobate mind; and that it is to be aſcribed to divine reſtraints, or to the grace of God ſhining in his heart, and giving him the light of the knowledge of the glory of God in the face of Jeſus Chriſt,

Chriſt, that he has any degree of true faith, and has not abandoned himſelf to total infidelity.

His remaining unbelief appears to him, eſpecially at times, to be ſo great and overbearing, that it is very grievous, and as a heavy burden ſinks him down, as an unſpeakable calamity, and exceeding criminal. Againſt this he has to watch, ſtrive and pray continually, and he can work out his ſalvation in no other way. His conſtant petition is, "Lord, deliver me from this evil heart of unbelief. Lord, I do believe, help thou my unbelief, and increaſe my faith. Give me that faith which is the ſubſtance of things hoped for, and the evidence of things not ſeen. May I never draw back to perdition, but believe to the ſaving of my ſoul."

8. The Chriſtian cannot work out his own ſalvation without reſiſting the devil, by watching againſt and oppoſing his influence, and the evil thoughts ſuggeſted by him.

The devil works in the hearts of men by the luſts, depraved propenſities and evil thoughts which have been mentioned. He is repreſented in ſcripture as taking the advantage of the depravity of man to ſuggeſt evil thoughts, and excite and ſtrengthen the luſts of the heart, and to blind the mind of all them who do not believe; to watch and exert all his cunning to deceive and deſtroy them. Unregenerate, wicked perſons are repreſented to be wholly under his power, in whom he powerfully worketh, they being in his ſnare, and led captive by him at his will. And in order to perſons being converted and becoming Chriſtians, this ſtrong enemy muſt be diſpoſſeſſed of their hearts, by Chriſt, and they turned from the power of Satan unto God. And though Chriſtians are ſo far delivered from the power of the devil, and out of his reach, that he cannot deſtroy or really hurt them in the end; and he who is born of God keepeth himſelf, and that wicked one toucheth him not; that is, is not able to deſtroy or hurt them, by leading them to ſin the ſin unto death, or

or to live in a courſe of ſin; yet they are not out of the reach of his temptations and aſſaults, ſo long as they are ſanctified but in part, and live in this ſtate of imperfection and depravity. Satan provoked king David to number the people; and our Saviour ſaid to Peter, "Behold, Satan hath deſired to have you, that he may ſift you as wheat." The apoſtle Paul was attended with a temptation which was the meſſenger of Satan to buffet him. And even Jeſus Chriſt, who had no depravity to give the devil an advantage, was aſſaulted and tempted by him. The apoſtle Peter directs Chriſtians to conſider the devil as their adverſary, as a roaring lion, walking about ſeeking whom he may devour. The apoſtle Paul, ſpeaking in the name of all Chriſtians, ſays, "We wreſtle not againſt fleſh and blood, but againſt principalities, againſt powers, againſt the rulers of the darkneſs of this world, againſt ſpiritual wickedneſs in high places;" and directs Chriſtians to take to themſelves the whole armour of God, that they may be able to ſtand againſt the wiles of the devil; and goes on to addreſs them in the following words: "Stand, therefore, having your loins girt about with truth, and having on the breaſtplate of righteouſneſs, and your feet ſhod with the preparation of the goſpel of peace; above [or over] all, taking the ſhield of faith, wherewith ye ſhall be able to quench all the fiery darts of the wicked one. And take the helmet of ſalvation, and the ſword of the Spirit, which is the word of God: praying always with all prayer and ſupplication in the Spirit, and watching thereunto with all perſeverance, and ſupplication for all ſaints:" [*Eph.* vi. 10, 18.]

In theſe words great and conſtant work is preſcribed to Chriſtians in reſiſting the devil, and ſtanding their ground againſt all his wiles and aſſaults; a conflict too great and mighty for all but thoſe who are ſtrong in the Lord, and in the power of his might; yet neceſſary in working out their own ſalvation. The apoſtles James and Peter exhort Chriſtians to this ſame work in the words following: "Reſiſt the devil, and he will flee from

from you. Be ſober, be vigilant; becauſe your adverſary the devil, as a roaring lion, walketh about ſeeking whom he may devour: whom reſiſt, ſtedfaſt in the faith."

There are ſome who profeſs to receive the Bible as a revelation from God, who doubt whether there be any devil, or inviſible ſpirits who are enemies to Chriſt, and ſeek the deſtruction of men. But ſurely they muſt be very inattentive to the Bible who can doubt of this. The real Chriſtian finds the truth of this ſo abundantly aſſerted, that he cannot doubt of it: and his own experience, if properly attended to, will confirm him in this. He will find many motions and ſuggeſtions in his own mind, which, from the kind of them, and the manner in which they take place, are evidently from the agency of Satan. And he is warranted from ſcripture to conſider the devil as having a hand and agency in all the fooliſh imaginations, evil thoughts and motions of his heart, and in all ſin which he ſees in others; eſpecially their oppoſition to Chriſt and the goſpel, and unrighteouſneſs and violence towards men; for he is deceiving the whole world, and works in all the children of diſobedience, and is attempting to ſtir up all the corruption which is in the hearts of good men. Therefore, while Chriſtians are watching againſt and oppoſing all their own evil propenſities, and acting againſt and endeavouring to ſuppreſs and counteract the ſinful courſes of others, they are really reſiſting the devil, while they conſider themſelves and others as criminal, for every evil motion in their hearts, and all wrong conduct, as if there were no devil to tempt them.

However great, difficult and of long continuance this work of reſiſting the devil is, every Chriſtian muſt go through it, and overcome, in order to obtain heaven. The Chriſtian is in himſelf wholly unequal to it, but by Chriſt ſtrengthening him he may go through it all. The Chriſtian muſt do the work, while in order to it he muſt be ſtrengthened by the power and grace of Chriſt, by which he becomes ſtrong in the Lord and in the power

of his might. The Chriſtian has no reaſon to deſire that Chriſt ſhould take this work out of his hands, and reſiſt and conquer the devil and his luſts without the agency of the Chriſtian; but ought to conſider it as a great privilege to be obliged to do the work himſelf, and conquer, in the ſtrength and power of the Redeemer.

## Sermon X.

The ſame Subject continued.

Phil. ii. 12, 13. *Work out your own ſalvation with fear and trembling: for it is God who worketh in you, both to will and to do, of his good pleaſure.*

IT has been attempted to ſhew in the preceding diſcourſe, though in an imperfect, defective manner and degree, what the Chriſtian has to oppoſe, ſuppreſs, mortify and overcome, in working out his own ſalvation. This may be called the negative part of his work, conſiſting in renouncing and departing from evil; and is all comprehended in the apoſtolic injunction, "That ye put off, concerning the former converſation, *the old man*, which is corrupt according to the deceitful luſts:" [*Eph.* iv. 22.]

*Secondly.* We come now to conſider the poſitive part of that work in doing which Chriſtians work out their own ſalvation, which is ſummarily expreſſed in the following words: "And that ye put on the new man, which after God is created in righteouſneſs and true holineſs."

This implies much, and conſiſts in a conſtant, careful endeavour to conform to and obey the divine commands in heart and life, to live ſoberly, righteouſly and godly in all things to the end of life. This may be divided

vided into two branches, viz. the duties of which God is the more direct object, and those which more immediately respect man.

To God they owe their whole selves, and all they can do. They must love him with all their heart, soul, strength and mind. This implies a variety of strong, constant exercises of heart towards him, as he is revealed in three persons, the Father, Son and Holy Ghost; especially as he has appeared God manifest in the flesh, in the character of the Son of God, and Saviour of the world, exhibited in his words, and works of obedience and suffering, his death, resurrection from the dead, ascension to heaven, and reigning gloriously there; and in his revealed future designs and works.

They must believe in God and in Jesus Christ, that he is, and that he is a rewarder of them who diligently seek him. They must attend to, believe and realize his being and whole character as he is revealed in the Bible, with all the important and leading truths which are contained in it, setting God always before their eyes, and trusting in Christ for pardon and complete redemption, which implies all they want or can desire, diligently seeking the divine favour through him, or for his sake. Thus they must live a life of faith on the Son of God, desiring to be found in him, not having their own righteousness, which is of the law, but that which is through the faith of Christ, the righteousness which is of God by faith; heartily desiring and seeking his Spirit to dwell in them, and form their hearts to every Christian exercise and duty, and doing all in the name of Christ, in the exercise of a cordial love of his whole character, and pleasing approbation of the way of salvation of sinners which is revealed in the gospel.

They must be heartily devoted to the glory of God, to his honour, interest and kingdom, as the supreme object of their desire and affection. This is necessarily implied in supreme love to him, in which they give themselves wholly away to him in the exercise of the most friendly, benevolent love, rejoicing in his being, felicity and

and glory. This is in a true and in the higheſt ſenſe diſintereſted affection, and neceſſarily excludes all ſelfiſhneſs, ſo far as it takes place, as it cannot proceed from ſelf-love as the ground of it, but is directly contrary to it, as it gives up all ſelfiſh affection and intereſt, for an infinitely greater, more worthy and important intereſt and object; making the being of God, his intereſt and honour, their ſupreme intereſt, the object of their higheſt regard, and ultimate end, to which all other beings and intereſts are wholly ſubordinated, as not worthy any regard, but to be rejected when they come in competition with the honour and intereſt of this infinitely great, worthy and glorious Being. By this diſpoſition and exerciſe of heart alone do they comply with the apoſtolic command, "Whether ye eat or drink, or whatever ye do, do all to the glory of God. And that they who live, ſhould not henceforth live unto themſelves, but unto Him who died for them and roſe again." And thus they enter upon and live a life of true and real ſelf denial.

The more Chriſtians are ſwallowed up in views of the glory of God, and their hearts deſire and rejoice in the unchangeable and eternal glory and felicity of the Infinite Being, as the object of their whole purſuit, intereſt and happineſs, which does not conſiſt in the leaſt degree in ſelfiſh affection; the more is their own ſalvation promoted, and the greater is their enjoyment, and the nearer do they get to heaven. The perſon who, under the influence of ſelf love, or ſelfiſhneſs, ſeeks his own perſonal intereſt, honour and felicity ſupremely (and this is the unchangeable nature of every degree of ſelf love) exerts the whole ſtrength of his ſoul in direct oppoſition to the Chriſtian affection now deſcribed; and as he regards himſelf ſupremely, he ſubordinates the being, felicity and glory of God, that he may anſwer his own ſelfiſh ends thereby, and cares nothing for the former, aſide from his own ſuppoſed perſonal intereſt, or any farther than the latter may be promoted thereby. Such an affection is the ſtrongeſt contradiction to all truth, and does love and make a lie in the higheſt and moſt

moſt emphatical ſenſe. If the ſmalleſt pebble, or one grain of ſand, ſhould be ſelected and preferred to the whole material world, comprehending this earth, the ſun, moon, and all the ſtars, and no regard be paid to the exiſtence, order and beauty of the whole, any farther than they relate to that ſingle grain, and contribute to ſupport and favour that infinitely ſmall portion of the material world; this would not be more unreaſonable and contrary to the truth, yea, it would be infinitely leſs ſo, than for one individual perſon to pay a ſupreme regard to himſelf, and ſubordinate the Infinite Being to his own private, perſonal intereſt and happineſs, who is ſo great, worthy and glorious that there is infinitely leſs proportion between ſuch individual and Him, than there is between the leaſt grain of ſand and the whole material creation.

There are too many profeſſing Chriſtians who embrace and purſue a ſcheme of practical religion which is as unreaſonable, contrary to truth, and abſurd, as this appears to be. They ſay that it is impoſſible for men to love God, ſo long as they conſider him to be diſpleaſed with them, and think he does not love them; that he muſt firſt manifeſt to them that he is their friend, and loves them, and they muſt believe it, before they can love him; that in this way they were brought to love God, and to be reconciled to his character and law, and to all the truths and duties of Chriſtianity; they were brought firſt to ſee and believe that God loved them, and on this foundation only they firſt began to love him, and continue to be friendly to him. Thus they declare that all their regard and love to God is nothing but ſelf love, for they love him only becauſe he is a friend to them, and will anſwer their own ſelfiſh ends, and promote their own perſonal, ſelfiſh intereſt, and ſubordinate their Maker, and all his intereſt, to their own beloved ſelves. Their religion is all built on an impoſſible ſuppoſition, viz. that they had evidence that God loved them, before they had any love to him, and while they were his enemies; which is directly contrary to ſcripture and reaſon. But

if

if this were not contrary to ſcripture, and a mere deluſion, their love to God is as far from true friendſhip to him as darkneſs is from light; for it is nothing but ſelf love at ſecond hand, and is an affection which our Saviour condemns, as that which the moſt wicked man and greateſt enemy of God may have. He ſays, "If ye love them who love you," (i. e. merely becauſe they love you,) "what reward have ye? Do not even the publicans the ſame?"

The words of the apoſtle John are appealed to as a ſupport of this ſcheme of religion: "We love him becauſe he firſt loved us." But theſe words are entirely miſunderſtood by them, and perverted to a moſt injurious and fatal purpoſe. The apoſtle does not ſay, "We love God becauſe we firſt believed he loved us;" in which ſenſe they take the words, in order to anſwer their purpoſe. The natural and plain meaning of the words, and which is pointed out by the context, is this: "God loved us firſt, and gave his Son to die for us; and he has given us a heart to love him, by which we have been born of God: this is the cauſe of our loving God: for if he had not thus firſt loved us, while we were enemies, and cauſed us to be born again by his Spirit, we ſhould not have loved him: for he who is not born of God will not exerciſe any true love to him, though he ſhould love them, and tell them he did ſo, by a particular revelation. Therefore they who love God only upon this ſelfiſh ground, and build all their religion upon it, however zealous they may be, and however much they may do, are not working out their own ſalvation, but the contrary, and never will obtain it."

The importance of this point, and the deluſion with which ſo many are deceived, it is to be feared to their own ruin, is thought to be a ſufficient reaſon for this ſeeming digreſſion.

This ſupreme love to God, and dedication to him, living not unto themſelves, but to and for him, implies a hearty, ſenſible acknowledgement of him in all their ways, and in all events which take place; ſeeing his hand

hand in them all, and heartily submitting to him, and acquiescing in his governing providence, and rejoicing that the Lord reigns without controul, ordering every thing, and every circumstance, from the greatest to the least, in the exercise of infinite power, wisdom, rectitude and goodness.

This pious disposition, and these exercises of heart towards God, are to be expressed and acted out in all proper ways and conduct. This requires much care, labour and self denial, and a strong resolution, and much fortitude of mind. The Christian must confess Christ before men, must speak for him and in his cause, whenever there is a proper opportunity, and must publicly profess his belief in him and cordial subjection to him in obedience to all his commands, and attendance upon all his institutions. He must pay a strict and conscientious regard to the sabbath, carefully avoiding all those things which tend to interrupt his attendance on the religious duties of that day, devoting the whole time as much as may be to the exercises of religion, constantly attending on public worship, with seriousness and devotion. He must attend much to the Bible, daily reading and meditating upon it, that he may grow in his acquaintance with it, and be entertained and directed by it, "as a lamp to to his feet, and a light to his path." Thus "his delight is in the law of the Lord, and in his law doth he meditate day and night."

He will attend devoutly on the Lord's supper whenever he has opportunity, and be careful not to neglect the important preparatory duties of self examination, prayer, &c. He is a friend to family religion; and, if head of a family, will practise daily devotion in it, in attending to the word of God and prayer, taking particular care that the whole family attend in a serious and orderly manner, and that they are all instructed in things of religion, and under good regulation and government. And he will be careful that no worldly business or concern interrupt the religious duties of the family. He must also practise and constantly maintain secret prayer.

A Chriſtian cannot maintain his ſpiritual life, activity and comfort in the omiſſion of cloſet duties, and cannot work out his own ſalvation without conſtantly entering into his cloſet, agreeable to the direction of Chriſt, and being much in devotion there. The prayerleſs perſon is not in the way to heaven. Prayer comprehends not only petition for what perſons want, for themſelves and others, but adoration, and praiſe and thankſgiving for divine beneficence to themſelves and to others, together with humble confeſſion of ſin, unworthineſs and ill-deſert. The Chriſtian will find abundant matter for prayer and devotion, or intercourſe with God, every day and hour, and muſt in ſome good meaſure, at leaſt, act up to the apoſtolic direction, "praying always, with all prayer, and ſupplication in the Spirit; in every thing by prayer and ſupplication, with thankſgiving, make known his requeſts unto God," to whom he may have acceſs at all times through the great Mediator, with humble boldneſs and freedom.

And as the Chriſtian has made a public profeſſion of religion, and joined a particular Chriſtian church, he is under covenant engagements to watch over his brethren and ſiſters, and aſſiſt in the exerciſe of diſcipline, agreable to the directions of Chriſt; which requires great attention, care and reſolution, in order to be acquainted with the truth of facts, and judge and act, ſo far as he is called to it, agreeable to the truth and the dictates of Chriſtian love, and ſo as ſhall be moſt for the honour of Chriſt, and the good of every individual of the church. This is included in the exerciſe of piety towards God, as well as his duty to his fellow Chriſtians. And his love to God will induce him to ſpeak and act, in all companies and on all occaſions, for the honour of God, and ſo as to recommend Chriſtianity to all, being conſtantly concerned that his converſation ſhould be as becometh the goſpel of Chriſt.

*Another* branch of practice by which Chriſtians work out their own ſalvation conſiſts in thoſe duties which more immediately reſpect their fellow men. Theſe are all

all implied in loving their neighbour as themſelves, or doing to others as they would that others ſhould do unto them, and in expreſſing this love in all proper ways in words and conduct.

They are careful and exact to do juſtice to all with whom they have any connection, and are conſcientiouſly concerned and engaged not to injure any perſon either in their thoughts, words or actions, in any of his intereſts, of worldly property or character, of body or ſoul; conſtantly watching againſt and oppoſing the many temptations and opportunities to do wrong to any of thoſe with whom they have any concern, in the leaſt inſtance or degree; taking diligent heed not to practiſe according to the many falſe maxims and examples of mankind, but making the holy ſcripture their conſtant rule in all their thoughts, words and dealings with others.

And they are not only concerned and careful to do juſtice to all, but they love mercy, and wiſh and endeavour to do all the good they can unto all men, embracing all opportunities to promote their beſt intereſt, both temporal and eternal, whether they be friends or enemies. They muſt exerciſe a benevolent love to their worſt enemies, whatever injuries they may have received from them; they muſt wiſh them well, do good to them, and pray for them in particular, while they are praying for all men. And if at any time they are convinced that they have injured any of their fellow men, they muſt not reſt till they have made all the reparation or reſtitution which is in their power, whatever mortification, coſt and pains this may require.

They muſt be careful to ſpeak and conduct towards all with becoming decency and reſpect, whether ſuperiors, inferiors or equals; and to ſet good examples before all, of humility, temperance, ſobriety, meekneſs and kindneſs; being ready to every good work, practiſing patience, forgiveneſs and long-ſuffering, endeavouring to live in peace with all men, as far as ſhall be in their power. And to this end they muſt be careful to

practiſe all thoſe relative duties towards thoſe who are in the neareſt connection with them, whether huſband, wife, parents, children, brethren, ſiſters, domeſtics, and particular relatives or friends. And they have particular and important duties to do towards their brethren and ſiſters of the church, of the houſehold of faith, ſome of which have been mentioned under the preceding head. They muſt live in the exerciſe and expreſſion of benevolence and kindneſs to them, being ready and careful to miniſter to the relief and comfort of their bodies, by giving them food and raiment, and affording them any help of which any of them ſhall ſtand in need, and by exerciſing and manifeſting a particular concern and friendſhip for them, and complacency in them, in the exerciſe and practice of that *brotherly love* which is peculiar to Chriſtians.

They muſt be diligent and faithful in their particular calling and buſineſs, ſtriving to improve their time and talents to good purpoſe, ſo as to have a ſupply for their own bodily wants, and of theirs who depend in any meaſure on them; and ſo as to be able to give relief to all who ſtand in need; and ſo as to redeem time for religious exerciſes, and the improvement of their minds in all uſeful knowledge, which in their circumſtances they ſhall have opportunity to acquire, diligently improving all their time in ſomething really uſeful to themſelves or to others, or to both.

*Thirdly.* Chriſtians in working out their own ſalvation muſt perſevere in this work, which has been imperfectly deſcribed, to the end of life.

Chriſt ſaid to the Jews who profeſſed to believe on him, "If ye *continue* in my words, then are ye my diſciples indeed:" [*John* viii. 31:] which words imply that none are the true diſciples of Chriſt but thoſe who perſevere in obedience to him to the end of life. They only who overcome, are faithful unto death, and endure to the end, ſhall be ſaved: [*Math.* x. 22; *Rev.* ii. 7, 10.] "If any man draw back, my ſoul ſhall have no pleaſure in him," and he draws back unto perdition: [*Heb.* x. 38, 39.]

*Fourthly.*

*Fourthly.* The Chriſtian, in working out his own ſalvation, muſt increaſe and make progreſs in his labour and work, and daily do more and more. He muſt make advances in knowledge and ſkill in his buſineſs, and increaſe in zeal, engagedneſs and activity.

When a Chriſtian enters on his work he may be compared to a youth who begins to work at ſome trade. By working he continually increaſes in ſkill and ability to work: he daily makes advances in his work, and does more and more in a day, till he is perfect in his trade and buſineſs. So the Chriſtian who is working out his own ſalvation not only continues and perſeveres in his work, but his work increaſes on his hands, and he gains in ſkill and ſtrength, in his engagedneſs and activity, and does and abounds more and more. Increaſe in grace and holineſs is as neceſſary in order to obtain ſalvation, as perſeverance. It is eſſential to the nature of true grace to grow and increaſe in the exerciſe of it; ſo that it is as certain that he who does not make any advances in a holy life, and increaſe in his work, and abound more and more, is not in the way to heaven, and has no true grace, as it is of him who falls away, and wholly ceaſes to work. "The path of the juſt is as the ſhining light, which ſhineth more and more to the perfect day." There is no way to heaven but this.

The apoſtle Paul tells the church at Philippi, to whom he gave the direction in the text, that in working out his own ſalvation he was ſtriving to preſs forward, and go on in his Chriſtian courſe till he ſhould arrive to perfection, not reſting in any paſt or preſent attainments: "Not as though I had already attained, either were already perfect; but I follow after, if that I may apprehend that for which alſo I am apprehended of Chriſt Jeſus. Forgetting the things which are behind, and reaching forth unto thoſe things which are before, I preſs toward the mark, for the prize of the high calling of God in Chriſt Jeſus." The apoſtles inſiſt much on this, as the character and duty of Chriſtians, that they increaſe and abound more and more in each Chriſtian grace

grace and in every good work. This will appear by the following quotations: "Therefore, my beloved brethren, be ye ſtedfaſt, unmoveable, always abounding in the work of the Lord." To *abound in the work of the Lord* is to increaſe in working, and to do more and more. In this ſenſe the word *abound* is frequently uſed, which will appear from the paſſages which will now be quoted: "And this I pray, that your love may *abound* yet more and more in knowledge and in all judgment: [*Phil.* i. 9.] And the Lord make you to increaſe and *abound* in love one toward another, and toward all men. Furthermore, then, we beſeech you, brethren, and exhort you by the Lord Jeſus, that as ye have received of us how ye ought to walk and pleaſe God, ſo ye would *abound* more and more. Ye yourſelves are taught of God to love one another: but we beſeech you, brethren, that ye increaſe more and more: [1 *Theſſ.* iii. 12; iv. 1, 9, 10.] That ye might walk worthy of the Lord unto all pleaſing, being fruitful in every good work, and increaſing in the knowledge of God: [*Col.* i. 10.] For if theſe things, (i. e. the Chriſtian graces which he had juſt mentioned,) be in you and *abound*, they ſhall make you that ye ſhall be neither barren nor unfruitful in the knowledge of our Lord Jeſus Chriſt. For if ye do theſe things, ye ſhall never fall. For ſo an entrance ſhall be miniſtered unto you abundantly into the everlaſting kingdom of our Lord and Saviour Jeſus Chriſt. Beloved, beware leſt ye, being led away with the error of the wicked, fall from your own ſtedfaſtneſs: but grow in grace, and in the knowledge of our Lord and Saviour Jeſus Chriſt:" [2 *Pet.* i. 8, 10, 11; iii. 17, 18.] In theſe words, abounding in the exerciſe of every Chriſtian grace, and growing in grace, and in the knowledge of Chriſt, is repreſented as the only ſure way to eſcape falling into deſtruction, and to enter into the kingdom of heaven. The ſame truth was inculcated by Chriſt: "Every branch in me that beareth not fruit, he taketh away; and every branch that beareth fruit, he purgeth it, that it may bring forth more fruit."

According

According to this there are but two ſorts of viſible Chriſtians, viz. they who are not real Chriſtians, and conſequently bear no fruit; and they who are true Chriſtians, and are fruitful, being conſtantly purged ſo as to increaſe in their fruit, and bear more fruit the longer they live. And that this muſt be ſo is plain and certain, becauſe for a man to work out his own ſalvation is to do that by which he is ripening, preparing and becoming more meet for the kingdom of heaven; which he cannot do but by growing in grace, and becoming more and more holy, and going on toward perfection in holineſs: and this is the ſame with abounding more and more in every good work.

*This* is the work and life of a Chriſtian, a deſcription of which has been now attempted in order to ſhow what is intended by his working out his own ſalvation. This attempt, though imperfect and defective, will ſerve to diſcover what this work is, according to the holy ſcriptures, in the moſt eſſential part of it, and that it is indeed a very great work, infinitely the greateſt, moſt difficult and important, that any man ever engaged in and performed.

Some, it may be, will be ready to ſay, as the diſciples of Chriſt ſaid to their Lord, on a certain occaſion, "Who then can be ſaved!" If this be the work of a Chriſtian, and the only way to work out our own ſalvation; if men muſt thus deny all ungodlineſs, and every worldly luſt, and muſt live thus ſoberly, righteouſly and godly in the world; if they muſt be ſo ſtrict, careful, watchful, painful and laborious in this work; if they have to oppoſe and conquer ſuch numerous, crafty and powerful enemies, and muſt deny themſelves, and take up their croſs daily; if they can have no reſpite, can never be releaſed from this work, by night or by day, but muſt perſevere in it to the end of life; and not only ſo, but their work increaſes on their hands every day, ſo that the longer they work, the more is required, and the more they do, the more they have to do; if this be the caſe with man, if this be the only way to heaven,

heaven, who will ever get there! If there be any in the way to ſalvation, ſurely they are very few; the moſt are like to miſs of it forever. And who can have courage to engage in ſuch a work as this! and how is this conſiſtent with the words of Chriſt: "Take my yoke upon you, and learn of me, for I am meek and lowly in heart; and ye ſhall find reſt to your ſouls: for my yoke is eaſy, and my burden is light?"

A full anſwer to this is found in the reply of Chriſt to the queſtion which his diſciples put to him: "Who then can be ſaved?" "This is indeed impoſſible with men, but not with God; for with God all things are poſſible." Though man, in his fallen, depraved ſtate, be altogether unequal to this work, and will never, of himſelf, do any thing to any purpoſe; yet, by the help of God, by his grace and aſſiſtance, he may do all this, and work out his own ſalvation; and he will find it to be not only poſſible, and that, by Chriſt ſtrengthening him, he can do all theſe things, and more; but the moſt agreeable and pleaſant work in which man can be employed. This is held forth in the text, which is to be farther explained, and will be more particularly conſidered in the ſequel.

But before we paſs to this, ſeveral obſervations will be made with regard to working out our own ſalvation, as it has been deſcribed, which may prevent any miſunderſtanding, and throw farther light on the ſubject.

I. By Chriſtians working out their own ſalvation is not meant that by this they ſo recommend themſelves to God, that out of regard to the worth and merit of their good works they obtain an intereſt in the divine promiſes, and a title to ſalvation. The declarations of ſcripture are directly contrary to ſuch a ſuppoſition. "By grace are ye ſaved, through faith, and that not of yourſelves; it is the gift of God. Not of works: for we are his workmanſhip, created in Chriſt Jeſus unto good works. Not by works of righteouſneſs which we have done, but according to his mercy he ſaved us, by the waſhing of regeneration and renewing of the Holy Ghoſt."

Ghoſt." Men are brought into a ſtate of ſalvation, and an intereſt in the promiſes of the covenant of grace, and have a title to eternal life, by the firſt act which unites them to him, that is, by the firſt exerciſe of faith on him. They do not earn or merit ſalvation by their works, nor do they aim at or attempt this, or have the leaſt deſire of it. They are ſo far from this, that their firſt holy exerciſe implies a ſenſe of their unworthineſs and ill deſert; and they come to Chriſt for ſalvation as a free gift to the infinitely unworthy and ill deſerving, truſting in his merit and righteouſneſs to recommend them to all that favour and ſalvation which they deſire and ſeek after. And all this is expreſſed or implied in all they do in working out their own ſalvation. They are ſo far from offering any thing of their own as the price of their ſalvation, that all their working and exertions are implied in coming to Chriſt and truſting in him for complete redemption as a free, undeſerved gift, to be obtained through him, without money or price. And all they do in working out their own ſalvation conſiſts eſſentially in this, in coming to Chriſt for all, and receiving all from him, even ſtrength, righteouſneſs and ſalvation, in a ſenſe of their total unworthineſs of the leaſt good, and deſert of infinite evil.

It is of importance that this point ſhould be viewed in this ſcriptural light, and kept in mind, to prevent thoſe dangerous miſtakes into which many have fallen.

Moreover, real Chriſtians not only have an intereſt in ſalvation by promiſe, when they begin to work it out; but if it were not ſo, all they do in working out their ſalvation is ſo far from meriting or deſerving ſalvation, or any favour, that they continually deſerve to be excluded from it forever and to periſh; and by all they do they do not become leſs ill deſerving than they were before they began to work, but more ſo. All they do is ſo defiled with ſin, is ſo deficient, and comes ſo far ſhort of what is their duty, that for this they deſerve to be given up to evil, and periſh, and muſt periſh after all, were it not for the merits of Chriſt; in whom they

they are accepted in all their holy exercises and works, and their sins are pardoned, and through his righteousness they receive the reward of eternal life. This every Christian feels constantly, and acknowledges to be true with regard to himself, while he is with the greatest care and diligence working out his own salvation.

II. Christians do not work out their own salvation in their own strength, but by the special and constant assistance and powerful influences of the Spirit of God, by which they are made strong in the Lord and in the power of his might. Christians are in themselves altogether unequal to this work, being nothing but weakness and insufficiency: it is infinitely too great and arduous for them: they depend entirely and constantly on the grace and assistance of God, in order to do any thing effectually towards it. This is abundantly declared in the scripture. Christ tells his disciples, "Without me ye can do nothing." And he said to the apostle Paul, "My grace is sufficient for thee: for my strength is made perfect in weakness." Paul therefore dared to say, "I can do all things through Christ who strengtheneth me. For when I am weak, then am I strong. By the grace of God I am what I am: and his grace, which was bestowed upon me, was not in vain, but I laboured more abundantly than they all: yet not I, but the grace of God which was with me." According to our text, it is God who worketh in them both to will and to do this great work which is before them. Without his energy, and constant effectual operation on their hearts, they would not take one step in this work, or put forth any act of will towards it. But this will be more particularly considered, in further attending to this subject.

III. This work is as necessary to be done in order to salvation, as it would be if men obtained a title to salvation by thus working, and merited it by their good works. Though men are not saved by or for their holiness, yet holiness is as necessary to salvation, as if they were; for deliverance from sin, and turning from it, and

and the exercise of holiness, is essential to salvation, as the latter can have no existence without the former. It is as necessary that men should be holy in order to salvation, as it would be were they to obtain a title to it and merit it by their holiness and good works; for it still remains true, that without holiness no man shall see the Lord, or enjoy salvation. But to be holy and exercise holiness, is to work out salvation, in the sense of the text, and as it has been now described.

The moral inability of man to exercise holiness, and go on to perfection in holiness of himself, does not make it in any degree less necessary that he should be holy in order to be happy; and therefore not the less necessary that in order to be holy men should be active and work; for that men should live a holy life, or be holy, without working, or the exercise of holiness, is a contradiction.

IV. Though men are morally unable to work out their own salvation of themselves, but depend on God for assistance and grace, by which he worketh in them both to will and to do it; yet it is not only as necessary they should do these works, but they are as much their own works and actions, as if they did them of themselves, without any assistance and powerful, effectual influence from God. God's assisting men to do these works, does not make them the less man's own exercises and works, than if they did them without any assistance. Every act of any person's will or choice, and all the designed attendants and consequences of such a volition, are his own exercises and actions, and it is impossible it should be otherwise, whatever influences he is the subject of in order to his thus willing and acting. Whatever a man wills, and does in the execution of his will, are *his own* exercises of will, and *his own* actions, and cannot be otherwise; and to assert the contrary is always an untruth, and a palpable contradiction.

It would be needless to make this observation, were it not that some have been so thoughtless and absurd, however learned and judicious in other matters, as to

ſay, that if God worketh in men to will and to do, ſo that their choice and doing is the effect of what God does work in them, then it is God who wills and does, and not man; and if there be any virtue or goodneſs in what is done, it is the virtue and goodneſs of God, and not man's. But this is manifeſtly moſt abſurd, and contrary to the reaſon and common ſenſe of mankind; for they feel and know that every thing which men will and do is their own choice and deed, and not of any other; and that, whatever induced them thus to will and do; and that it is as much their own act and deed, as if they had done it without any ſuch influence. And if what they do be right and virtuous, it is as much their own virtue and goodneſs, as it could be if they had done it without any influence or aſſiſtance from others.

Upon the whole, to conclude this head, it appears that Chriſtians have a great work to do, which is abſolutely neceſſary in order to be ſaved, in which they muſt be active, muſt will and do it. And this is to perfect holineſs in the fear of God, and work out their own ſalvation with fear and trembling. And this is the work ſpoken of in the text; a deſcription of which has been attempted in the preceding diſcourſe: which may God bleſs to the benefit of all who ſhall give to it a proper attention. AMEN.

## Sermon XI.

Phil. ii. 12, 13. *Work out your own ſalvation with fear and trembling: for it is God who worketh in you, both to will and to do, of his good pleaſure.*

IN attending to theſe words it has been attempted to conſider and ſhew what is intended by Chriſtians working out their own ſalvation. This has been endeavoured

voured in the preceding diſcourſes. It is now propoſed,

II. To conſider what is meant by their doing this *with fear and trembling*.

It is of importance to obſerve here, and let it be kept in view, that this paſſage of ſcripture cannot be underſtood, and the true ſenſe of it given, unleſs the real meaning of theſe words be properly aſcertained, and fixed in our minds: for they are really the key by which alone the meaning of the whole paſſage is opened, and without which the true intent and force of theſe words of the Apoſtle cannot be perceived. This, it is expected, will be made to appear before the ſubject is diſmiſſed; and is a reaſon why theſe words ſhould be examined with particular care and attention, that the true import of them may not be overlooked, and they be taken in a wrong ſenſe, but the true meaning of them be known and fixed.

The drift and force of the exhortation of the apoſtle is not merely to work out their own ſalvation, but has a principal and chief reſpect to the *manner of doing this*, which is expreſſed in the words, "With fear and trembling." Therefore in theſe words is contained an eſſential part of the exhortation; and to this part, which points out the manner and only way in which they could work out their own ſalvation, the following words do wholly refer, as an argument to enforce it: "FOR it is God who worketh in you both to will and to do, of his good pleaſure." This is a reaſon, not merely why they ſhould work out their own ſalvation, but why they ſhould do this with fear and trembling, as the only way in which it could be done. Whatever men may do, and however much and great pains and labour they may take in working out their ſalvation; yet if they do not this with fear and trembling, they will fail of obtaining ſalvation. This points out the only way to heaven. But this will be more particularly conſidered and illuſtrated in the proſecution of this ſubject.

The

The following particulars will ſerve to lead to the true meaning of fear and trembling.

1. Theſe words muſt intend ſomething which is right and becoming all Chriſtians at all times, while they are working out their own ſalvation. It is what is eſſential to all truly Chriſtian grace and exerciſes, and belongs to the beauty and excellence of their character: and as they cannot be real Chriſtians and live as ſuch without it, ſo the more they have of it, the better and more ſtrong and excellent Chriſtians they are. If this were not ſo, the Apoſtle would not have exhorted them, and conſequently all Chriſtians, at all times and in all ages, thus to work out their own ſalvation. It would be injurious and abſurd to ſuppoſe that he exhorted to thoſe exerciſes and that practice which are not virtuous and excellent, and becoming all Chriſtians, at all times, as their indiſpenſable duty, in which they are bound to excel, and cannot be practiſed to exceſs. This obſervation, of the truth of which none can doubt, will help to ſhew what is not intended by fear and trembling here, viz. all thoſe exerciſes which are wrong, or are a blemiſh and imperfection in the character of a Chriſtian. Theſe muſt all be excluded, and will lead to the obſervations following.

2. The Apoſtle does not exhort Chriſtians to work out their own ſalvation under the influence of a ſervile, *ſlaviſh fear* of God, in which no true love is implied, but is contrary to a ſpirit of love. This is ſometimes meant by fear in the ſcriptures, and is condemned as contrary to a Chriſtian ſpirit of love and true obedience. This Apoſtle ſays to Chriſtians, "Ye have not received the ſpirit of bondage again to fear; but ye have received the Spirit of adoption, whereby we cry, Abba Father. God hath not given us the ſpirit of fear; but of power, of love and of a ſound mind:" [*Rom.* viii. 15; 2 *Tim.* i. 7.]* He therefore certainly did not exhort Chriſtians

* The word in the original, tranſlated fear, 2 *Tim.* i. 7, is *deilias*, which is not the word commonly uſed for fear, and the moſt proper meaning of it is *cowardice*.

to

to exercise such fear in working out their salvation. The apostle John says, there is no fear in love; but perfect love casteth out fear. He that feareth is not made perfect in love.

3. By fear and trembling here is not meant a constant trembling fear of falling away and perishing at last. This cannot be the meaning, because this is not the duty of all Christians, and cannot be considered as a Christian virtue, but rather an imperfection, and at least a defect of grace. Christians are directed to make their calling and election sure. The Apostle speaks of those Christians to whom he gave the exhortation under consideration, as those of whom he was confident that God would carry on the work he had begun in them, until the day of Jesus Christ. And how could he direct them to tremble with fear of perishing, when he at the same time had told them he was confident that Christ would save them? Why might not they be as confident of their salvation as he was? He speaks in the language of assurance of his own salvation in this letter. He speaks of his own death as connected with his being with Christ. And he says of himself, with others, "*We know* that if our earthly house of this tabernacle were dissolved, we have a building of God, an house not made with hands, eternal in the heavens." And no doubt some, if not many, of the Christians at Philippi, had a comfortable assurance of their interest in the covenant of grace, and consequently that they should be saved. It is certain that the Apostle did not know that this was not true of them. It is therefore certain that he considered this exhortation to be applicable to the most assured Christian that was then on earth, or ever will live in this world, and pointed out their duty as much as of those who were in doubt whether they should be saved or not. The Apostle himself, and every assured Christian, had as much of this fear and trembling as any Christian whatever, and it was as much his and their duty and privilege, and essential to their character,

character, in which they would abound more and more as they advanced in the Chriſtian life, and excellent attainments.

The word *fear* is often uſed in ſcripture in a ſenſe which denotes that which is a virtue and real piety, and in this ſenſe are fear and trembling uſed. And the fear of the Lord, or to fear God, commonly means the exerciſe of true piety. Of this all who read the Bible with attention are ſenſible.

From the foregoing obſervations it evidently appears, that by fear and trembling in the text muſt be intended CHRISTIAN HUMILITY, with all the natural and neceſſary attendants of it, conſiſting in a ſenſe of their own depravity and guilt, or ill deſert, and of their total moral impotence and inſufficiency in themſelves, to work out their own ſalvation, or to will and do any thing towards it; with an entire and conſtant dependence on and truſt in God the Saviour for pardon and acceptance, through his atonement, and the influences of his Spirit to give them moral diſcerning, ſtrength and ability to work out their own ſalvation, in a ſenſe of his greatneſs, majeſty, power and ſovereignty, who has mercy on whom he will have mercy, and whom he will he hardeneth; and of their own littleneſs, vileneſs, and infinite unworthineſs of the leaſt favour; while they view deſtruction, which they deſerve, and ſhall certainly fall into, unleſs they are reſcued by the mighty power and ſovereign grace of God, in all the horrors and dreadfulneſs of it; and the infinite greatneſs, worth and importance of that ſalvation which is given by Chriſt to all who believe and obey him.

That all this is implied in that humility and faith which is eſſential to the character of a Chriſtian, and by which he lives, and works out his own ſalvation, none can doubt who properly attends to the ſubject. And that the whole of this is implied and expreſſed in the words fear and trembling, is evident, from the uſe of thoſe words in other places, and on different occaſions, and from what follows in the paſſage we are upon.

We

We find these words used three times, beside that in the text before us, by this Apostle. He says to the Corinthians, "I was with you in weakness, and in fear, and in much trembling." He seems here to set himself designedly in contrast with those whom he calls false apostles, who appeared proud and self-sufficient, and affected a great parade and show of their own abilities and accomplishments, and boasted great things. On the contrary, when he was with them, and God did great things among them by his ministry in their conversion, he gloried not in himself, but in the Lord, and laboured among them in fear and much trembling, in a pressing sense of his own weakness, and insufficiency for the great work in which he was engaged; that he was nothing, and that God alone could give the increase and success desired. He expresses the same thing in the following words: "Not that we are sufficient of ourselves to think any thing as of ourselves, but our sufficiency is of God." When he speaks of the Corinthians receiving Titus *with fear and trembling*, the meaning is, that they received him in humility and lowliness of mind, in a sense of their own sinfulness and unworthiness, and readiness to receive instruction from him, sensible of their ignorance and need of being taught; in opposition to self-sufficience and pride, undervaluing and despising him.

This same Apostle says to servants, "Be obedient to them who are your masters according to the flesh, *with fear and trembling*. None can reasonably suppose that servants are here commanded to act from a servile, slavish fear of their masters, doing all and obeying them out of fear of their rod: for this is not a commendable spirit in servants. By fear and trembling is evidently meant a spirit of humility and submission to the will of their masters; willing to take their own proper place; not setting up for themselves, but feeling their dependence upon their masters for all temporal support, realizing the evil consequence of a contrary spirit and conduct, of pride and self-sufficiency. And in Rom. xi. 20,

xi. 20, he uſes the word fear to denote a Chriſtian virtue, in oppoſition to pride and ſelf-conſidence: "Well, becauſe of unbelief they were broken off, and thou ſtandeſt by faith. Be not high-minded, but fear."

And that the meaning of fear and trembling in the text which has been given is the only true meaning, is evident from the words which immediately follow theſe: "*For* it is God who worketh in you, both to will and to do, of his good pleaſure." This is given as the reaſon why they ſhould work out their own ſalvation *with fear and trembling*. And this is a good reaſon why they ſhould do this, in a humbling ſenſe of their own depravity, unworthineſs, and moral inability to work out their own ſalvation, and continually maintain ſelf-diffidence, in a ſenſe of the greatneſs of the work, and their own inſufficiency, and their entire dependence on God for his powerful influence on their hearts, in order to their willing and doing, and taking one ſtep in their Chriſtian courſe. But if theſe words are not taken in this ſenſe, the propriety and force of the argument cannot be diſcerned, and is loſt. But this is to be more fully conſidered under another head.

Having given a ſummary of the meaning of fear and trembling in the text, in order more fully to elucidate this point it will be proper, if not neceſſary, particularly to ſhew what is implied in this general account; which may be done under the following heads.

1. Fear and trembling implies a trembling conviction and ſenſe of their own weakneſs, and total inſufficiency, in themſelves, to work out their own ſalvation, while they have ſome true view of the greatneſs, difficulty, importance and neceſſity of the work, and that it muſt be done by them, being moſt reaſonable, and their indiſpenſable duty.

This ſelf-diffidence every Chriſtian feels and conſtantly exerciſes in diſclaiming all moral power and ability to do any thing towards his ſalvation, if left to himſelf, and is neceſſarily implied in that humility denoted by fear and trembling.

2. This

2. This is attended with a thorough conviction, and ſenſible acknowledgment, that this their weakneſs and utter inſufficiency is wholly their own fault; that it conſiſts in their moral depravity, and the inexcuſable wickedneſs of their own hearts. This conviction and view of themſelves ſtrikes death to their pride, and is an eſſential ingredient in Chriſtian humility, and in fear and trembling.

3. Conſequently, fear and trembling includes in it an affecting conviction of their own unworthineſs and ill deſert; that they are utterly unworthy of ſalvation, and of that aſſiſtance and grace by which alone they can obtain it, and deſerve to be left of God to fall into deſtruction; which would certainly be the caſe, in a moment, if God ſhould deal with them according to their folly and crimes, and withhold from them that aſſiſtance and ſovereign goodneſs which they are conſtantly forfeiting, and pour that evil on their heads which they are provoking him to inflict; that they are therefore in the hands of a ſovereign God, who has mercy on whom he will have mercy, and whom he will he hardeneth. This view and ſenſe of the truth will not be in the leaſt removed or abated by the ſtrongeſt well grounded hope and confidence that this ſovereign God has had mercy on them; and therefore does not in any degree exclude the humility, the fear and trembling, implied in a real and conſtant conviction of theſe truths.

4. Fear and trembling implies a fearful and trembling ſenſe of the infinite and amazing dreadfulneſs of endleſs deſtruction, which the Chriſtian conſiders and dreads as his certain portion, if he ſhould have his deſert, and not be reſcued and ſaved from it, by the conſtant exertion of the mighty power and ſovereign grace of Jeſus Chriſt. The ſtrongeſt Chriſtian hope and aſſurance that they have a divine promiſe that they ſhall eſcape this evil, and be kept by the mighty power of Chriſt, through faith, unto ſalvation, will not remove or abate this awful view of deſtruction: but they who have the

higheſt well grounded confidence of their ſalvation, will have the greateſt ſenſe of the evil implied in periſhing forever.

5. A belief and ſenſe of the infinite greatneſs, power and terrible majeſty of God, and a correſpondent conviction of their own littleneſs and nothingneſs in his ſight, impreſſing an awe of his diſpleaſure, and dread of ſinning againſt him, is implied in fear and trembling. This ſenſe and feeling will increaſe, as Chriſtians grow in grace and in the knowledge of Jeſus Chriſt, whatever evidence and aſſurance they may have of the favour and love of God.

6. The Chriſtian works out his own ſalvation with fear and trembling, while he conſtantly views and feels the dangers with which he is ſurrounded, by which he is liable to fall and periſh, and againſt which he has no ſtrength and ſecurity in himſelf; that he is always ſurrounded by innumerable hoſts of inviſible, ſubtil, potent enemies, who are ſeeking his eternal ruin, and doing all they can to prevent his ſalvation; while he has no more power or ſkill in himſelf to reſiſt or eſcape their rage, and deſtruction by them, than an infant has to conquer a roaring lion.

This is the repreſentation which Chriſt himſelf gives of the ſtate and circumſtances of a Chriſtian, while in this world. He ſpeaks to every Chriſtian of which his church is compoſed in the following language: "Look unto me from the lion's dens, from the mountains of the leopards:" [*Solomon's Song*, iv. 8.] He ſpeaks to his church, and to every believer of which it is compoſed, as dwelling among lions, even in their dens, continually expoſed to be devoured by them; and in the midſt of leopards, beaſts of prey, who conceal themſelves in thickets and on trees, from which they ſuddenly dart themſelves, ſeize and devour men as they paſs: denoting that they are in ſuch a dangerous ſtate in this world, and continually expoſed to be deſtroyed by powerful, inviſible enemies, which is fully repreſented by perſons lying in the dens of hungry, devouring lions, or on mountains

mountains haunted by leopards, every moment expoſed to be deſtroyed by them, having nothing to defend themſelves from them. He calls to them to look to him as their only refuge and deliverer, letting them know their dangerous, helpleſs ſituation, and that in him alone their help is found.

7. This is attended with a conſtant and increaſing view and ſenſe of the dangerous enemies which they have within themſelves, conſiſting in their moral depravity and evil propenſities; that if Chriſt ſhould leave them to themſelves, they ſhould immediately turn his enemies, and join with the devil, and be on his ſide and eſpouſe his cauſe in oppoſition to Jeſus Chriſt, and finally fall with him into eternal deſtruction.

8. Fear and trembling is not only conſiſtent with, but neceſſarily implies, a humble and conſtant dependence on Jeſus Chriſt alone for grace and ſtrength to follow him through all theſe dangers and difficulties, leaning on his almighty arm, his infinite wiſdom, goodneſs, truth and faithfulneſs, for pardon of their ſins through his atonement, and deliverance from moral depravity; for power and ſkill to reſtrain and conquer their own luſts, and eſcape everlaſting deſtruction; truſting in him to work in them both to will and to do all that is implied in their working out their own ſalvation. This, and all which has been mentioned in the above particulars, is implied in fear and trembling; in that humility and ſaving faith by which the Chriſtian lives, and works out his own ſalvation. By this he becomes ſtrong in the Lord, and in the power of his might. His grace is ſufficient for him, and by it he overcomes.

9. As every Chriſtian is coming vaſtly ſhort in his duty in every thing which he does, and is conſtantly guilty of much ſin, ſo he is in danger of unthought of deviations from his duty, and by temptations to fall into particular groſs ſins, againſt which he has no ſecurity by the promiſes of the covenant of grace; and to eſcape theſe he depends upon the ſovereign will of God, who worketh

worketh in him both to will and to do, *of his own good pleasure*. This is the ground of a constant dread of every sin of omission or commission, and continual care and watching against all sin, and fear of displeasing God, so as to leave him to commit some particular sin, in a trembling sense of his own weakness, and the certainty that he shall not avoid it unless God be pleased to prevent it, by working in him to will and do the contrary. With this view and feeling the Christian ought daily to walk while he is working out his own salvation, however assured he may be that he shall not fall away finally and miss of salvation. And this is implied in the fear and trembling recommended in the text.

10. While Christians are working out their own salvation with fear and trembling, they are sensible and acknowledge that by their own works, and the utmost they can do, they do not in the least recommend themselves to God, as deserving any favour on this account; but are infinitely ill deserving as sinners, for which all they do makes not the least atonement; and so much depravity and sin constantly attends them in all they will and do, that they are continually adding to their guilt and ill desert. They therefore utterly renounce all dependence on their own righteousness, and trust wholly to the atonement and righteousness of Jesus Christ for the pardon of their sins, and for all the favour and blessings they want and hope for, willing and rejoicing to receive all this purely for the sake of his atonement and worthiness, while they are considered in themselves as infinitely unworthy of the least favour, and deserving of endless destruction. This view of themselves, and cordial acknowledgment of it, is agreeable to truth, and essential to Christian humility, while they live by faith on Jesus Christ, and "walk humbly with God." Thus the Christian saith (it is the constant language of his heart) "In the Lord have I righteousness and strength;" strength to work out my own salvation, and righteousness to recommend me to pardon and the favour of God. In the exercise of this fear and trembling the

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apoſtle Paul renounced all dependence on his own works, deſiring to be found in Chriſt, not having any righteouſneſs of his own, but that which is through the faith of Chriſt, the righteouſneſs which is of God by faith. Such only are of a contrite and humble ſpirit, who tremble at the word of God; conſtantly flying for refuge from the wrath to come, and laying hold on the hope ſet before them in Chriſt Jeſus. He who truſts to himſelf that he is righteous, and attempts to recommend himſelf to God, or thinks he deſerveth any favour for his own works, exerciſeth that pride and ſelf confidence which excludes fear and trembling, and is contrary to living by faith.

What has been now ſaid, in the deſcription of fear and trembling, may be in a partial and imperfect manner repreſented by the following ſimilitude.

A perſon finds himſelf in the midſt of a hideous foreſt and thicket, in which are unpaſſable mountains, ſwamps and dreadful precipices; he himſelf is ſick unto death, and not able to walk a ſtep, while he ſees himſelf ſurrounded by hungry lions, and innumerable other beaſts of prey, threatening to ruſh upon him and devour him. And on conſideration he finds he has brought himſelf into this dangerous, wretched ſtate by his own inexcuſable folly, and that his diſorders and weakneſs are really his own fault; that he has greatly abuſed the Lord and owner of the territory in which he is, and all things in it; that he might therefore juſtly in his diſpleaſure deliver him to the tormentors, and to be miſerably devoured by the fierce beaſts of prey. While he is in this ſituation, giving himſelf up to deſpair, as wholly loſt and doomed to inevitable deſtruction, the great perſonage, the owner of the foreſt and all that it contained, appears to him, and tells him that though he had abuſed him, and had ruined himſelf, by his own inexcuſable folly, yet he was ready to forgive him, and was able and diſpoſed to cure him of his diſorders, and give him ſtrength to walk, and to extricate him from the evil and dangerous ſtate in which he was, and make him happy in the

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moſt agreeable circumſtances. Upon this he ſtretched out his hand, and bid him take hold of it, and he ſhould be ſafely led out of this horrid place. The poor man felt an inviſible energy accompanying this propoſal and command, by which he was ſtrengthened and willing to lay faſt hold of the nobleman's hand, and to truſt wholly in him as his deliverer, pleaſed to be wholly dependent on him for all the good he wanted, having in himſelf not the leaſt ſufficiency to help himſelf, and being utterly unworthy of the favour now offered to him, firmly believing the truth and ability of his patron to accompliſh all he had promiſed.

The nobleman told him, that though he depended wholly on him for all his ſtrength to act and walk, and every volition to exert himſelf in order to eſcape the dangers of this wilderneſs, reſiſt the wild beaſts, paſs through the ſwamps and miry marſhes, aſcend the ſteep mountains, and ſtand firm on the brink and ſide of dreadful precipices, and arrive to the promiſed land; yet he muſt be active, and work out this his ſalvation in the exerciſe of his own care and conſtant labour; he muſt reſiſt the beaſts of prey, and by his watchfulneſs and exertions in every ſtep of the dangerous, difficult way he had to go, he muſt perſevere in his work, and in obedience to him, till he ſhould bring him to a place of ſafety and reſt; that, in a ſenſe of his own inſufficiency to will or do any thing in this travel in order to his ſalvation, and his total and conſtant dependence on his patron, for diſpoſition and ſtrength to will and do, and perſevere in the work before him, he muſt keep his eye upon him, and place all his truſt in him, keeping hold of his hand, or of a ſtrong cord which ſhould be faſtened to himſelf, his patron, and always be in his reach, when his hand was not. And in this way he ſhould be carried ſafely on to the land of promiſe.

Thus the poor man ſet out, confiding in the power, truth and faithfulneſs of his patron, and diſclaiming all confidence in himſelf; continuing his courſe through hideous ſwamps, and over high and ſteep mountains, and

and on the edge of dreadful precipices, when by loſing his hold or taking one wrong ſtep he ſhould fall and be daſhed in pieces in a moment, unleſs prevented by his guide, making uſe of the ſtrong cord when his patron was out of ſight. Thus he went on in the exerciſe of conſtant care and watchfulneſs, and inceſſant exertion, taking heed that every ſtep of his ſhould be according to the direction of his leader; and found that the efforts which he made to reſiſt the wild beaſts of prey, which continually ſought to devour him, were effectual to make them fly from him, and thus he kept himſelf from their deadly touch. And the farther he went, he became more afraid of diſpleaſing his guide, who was ſo worthy, kind and condeſcending; and increaſed in a ſenſe of his danger if left to himſelf, and the certainty and dreadfulneſs of the deſtruction which would in that caſe await him; confiding altogether in the power, wiſdom, truth and goodneſs of his patron. He ſometimes in a meaſure forgot his own weakneſs, and conſtant dependence on his patron, and attempted to ſtand and walk in his own ſtrength; but this always coſt him dear; for when he thought thus to ſtand, he certainly fell, and it proved the occaſion of ſhame and humiliation. And he made many wrong ſteps, which he knew was offenſive to his patron, which filled him with ſhame and pain, and ſerved to increaſe ſelf-abhorrence and diffidence in himſelf. Thus he went on through all the difficulties and dangers of the way, in fear and trembling, increaſing in ſelf-diffidence and humility, and in his humble dependence and truſt in his able, faithful patron, till he came to the promiſed land of ſafety and reſt, where he is to live a happy and endleſs life.

From the whole which has been ſaid in the deſcription of fear and trembling, the reſult is, that it conſiſts moſt eſſentially in Chriſtian humility and poverty of ſpirit, in a ſenſe of their own weakneſs, and inſufficiency to work out their own ſalvation, and a humble truſt in God for his conſtant, powerful energy on their hearts, diſpoſing and prompting them effectually to will and to

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do all that they muſt will and do in order to be ſaved; together with all thoſe views and exerciſes which are implied in this, according to the various objects in their ſight, and the circumſtances with which they are attended. This is eſſential to the life of all Chriſtians, and to the exerciſe of every Chriſtian grace; and the more they have of this, the ſtronger and more beautiful Chriſtians they are. Thus the apoſtle Paul worked out his own ſalvation with fear and trembling, while confident and aſſured of the favour and love of God, and of eternal life. He felt himſelf to be nothing but weakneſs, while he was ſtrong in the Lord; to be leſs than the leaſt of all ſaints, and that he was nothing, and the chief of ſinners. He felt that all his ſufficiency was of God; that by his grace working effectually in him, he was what he was, and did what he did in the Chriſtian life. Well might he then recommend this fear and trembling to all Chriſtians, as eſſential to their character, without which all their attempts to work out their own ſalvation would be in vain, and end in ſad diſappointment.

And if this Apoſtle did work out his ſalvation with fear and trembling, then the greateſt and moſt aſſured Chriſtian does not get beyond or above this; but the more he has of it, the greater is his ſtrength and excellence. This has been in ſome meaſure kept in view through the whole of this deſcription of fear and trembling. And the Chriſtian who has not an aſſurance of his ſalvation, but at times is in great doubts whether he be a real Chriſtian or not; though he may differ in ſome reſpects in his views, feelings and exerciſes from the aſſured Chriſtian, yet he is working out his ſalvation with this ſame fear and trembling which the aſſured Chriſtian has, while he is attended with many doubts and fears, which perfect, or a more ſtrong love would caſt out.

From the foregoing view of fear and trembling, it appears to conſiſt in a diſpoſition and exerciſes of heart which are in direct oppoſition to a ſelf-righteous ſpirit,

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or a truſt and confidence in ourſelves, relying on our own ſtrength and ſufficiency to work out our own ſalvation, depending on this as a righteouſneſs to recommend to divine favour. They who are of this diſpoſition depend on themſelves to move *firſt*, and ſet themſelves to work out their own ſalvation, hoping for all the favour they think they want, as the conſequence of their thus working, and out of regard to it. This evil diſpoſition, which is contrary to the nature of Chriſtian exerciſes, our Saviour ſets in a clear and ſtriking light in the character and conduct of the phariſee, who applies to God in a confidence in his own ſufficiency and righteouſneſs, truſting in himſelf that he is righteous, valuing himſelf on his own ſuppoſed good character, and deſpiſing others. The publican is an inſtance of humble fear and trembling.

## Sermon XII.

Phil. ii. 12, 13. *Work out your own ſalvation with fear and trembling: for it is God who worketh in you, both to will and to do, of his good pleaſure.*

III. THE next thing propoſed is, to conſider and ſhow what is the meaning of God's working in Chriſtians both to will and to do of his good pleaſure. This may be done by attending to the following particulars.

1. Working *in* men to will and to do, muſt intend more than affording them external means and advantages, and urging them by external motives to will and to do; for this cannot with any propriety be called working in them, when all that is ſuppoſed to be done is done out of them and externally. Some have ſuppoſed this to be all the meaning of theſe words; not

becauſe it is the natural meaning of them, for it is a *forced* meaning; but becauſe they think man needs no more to be done for him in order to his working out his own ſalvation, and that any thing more, and an immediate operation on the will, is inconſiſtent with his liberty, and his actions being his own, or really virtuous. But the abſurdity of all this has been often fully ſhewn, and will appear before this ſubject is finiſhed. It is ſufficient to obſerve here, that to ſay that an operation on the human heart which effectually influences men to will and to do, that is, to act voluntarily, and conſequently freely, is inconſiſtent with their acting voluntarily, and willing and doing any thing in the exerciſe of all the liberty which can in nature exiſt or be conceived of, is inconſiſtent with human liberty, is as flat and palpable a contradiction as can be made. If to work in men ſo as effectually to prevent their willing and doing in any particular inſtance, be inconſiſtent with their having or exerciſing any freedom in that inſtance; then working in them ſo as effectually to make them will and do in that inſtance, or any other, is to promote their liberty, and cauſe them to act freely. And to ſay that what men do voluntarily is not in all caſes their own act and deed, is to ſay that men are not capable of doing any thing which is their own act; for they can do nothing but what they do voluntarily, and the ſtronger and the more forcibly the motives are impreſſed on their minds to induce them to will and act, the more freely they act, and the more ſenſibly are their choice and actions their own, and the more virtuous they are, if agreeable to the truth.

2. This does not mean any divine operation on man, which reſpects his willing and doing, of which willing and doing is not the certain conſequence, and which therefore is conſiſtent with his not willing and doing. For any divine operation in man, of which his willing and doing is not the effect, is not working in him to will and to do; becauſe, notwithſtanding ſuch operation, he is left ſhort of willing and doing. To work in men

men to will and to do, is to do that which is effectual to produce the will and the deed, so that there is a certain connection between the former and the latter. And this is the import of the original word here translated *worketh*. It signifies, to operate with energy, and effectually to accomplish the end, and produce the willing and doing.

That working in men to will which leaves them short of willing, is the same with working in them to will, *if they will*, which is talking most absurdly. Men are always able to will, *if they will*, and need no special assistance or influence on them to will what they will, or if they will, which is the same. If men are willing, or do will, they have no need of any operation or assistance to make them willing; for this they have already by the supposition; for they at all times can will, if they will. There can therefore be no such operation; and any supposed assistance or working in them which leaves them not actually willing or doing is not working in them to will and to do.

3. God worketh in Christians to will and to do, by giving them the powerful influences of his Spirit, without which they would neither will nor do those things by which they work out their own salvation, and which are effectual to cause them to will and do them; there being a certain and infallible connection of one with the other.

Men are naturally, while wholly destitute of such influences, not only entirely destitute of all inclination to every thing that is truly virtuous and holy, but their hearts or wills are obstinately set in them to do evil, and they run swiftly on with all their hearts towards destruction; and they go on in this course until God changes their hearts, by taking away the heart of stone, the obstinate, rebellious heart, and giving them a new heart, a humble, obedient heart, and thus makes them willing to obey him, in the day of his power, or by his omnipotent energy on their hearts. And when he has begun this great and good work in any whom he pleas-

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es, he carries it on until the day of Chriſt, and takes care conſtantly to grant them that aſſiſtance and thoſe influences by which he thoroughly and effectually worketh in them both to will and to do all thoſe things whereby they work out their own ſalvation, and are prepared to dwell with Jeſus Chriſt in his kingdom forever. They receive the Spirit of Chriſt when they firſt become Chriſtians, to be in and dwell with them forever, by whom they are led, and who is the author of every holy exerciſe of heart which they have, and of all the good works they do, by which they go on in the way to heaven, and until they are made perfectly holy. They being intereſted in the promiſes of the covenant of grace, their ſalvation is made ſure, and God is engaged by promiſe never to leave them or forſake them, but to lead them ſafely on to glory, and that he will keep them by his mighty power, through their faith, by which they ſhall work out their own ſalvation.

That God thus works in all true Chriſtians to will and to do all they will and do in working out their own ſalvation, and that they are thus wholly dependent on him for every right motion and choice of heart, and for every good thing they do, is not only plainly aſſerted in the words of the text, which cannot be underſtood in any other ſenſe than that which has been given of them, without ſtraining and forcing them to ſpeak an unnatural ſenſe, but is abundantly confirmed by innumerable other paſſages of ſcripture, which ſpeak the ſame language, and aſſert the ſame thing; too many to be rehearſed here, and of which the careful, intelligent reader of the Bible cannot be ignorant. And this is expreſsly or implicitly acknowledged by all Chriſtians in their prayers, however ſome profeſſing Chriſtians may in their ſpeculations, and even in the feelings and tenor of the exerciſes of their hearts, contradict it.

4. There appears to be ſome intended difference between willing and doing, when it ſaid, God worketh in Chriſtians *both* to will and to do. Strictly ſpeaking, men are active in nothing but in the exerciſe of their will,

will, or in *willing*; and therefore *do* nothing elſe: yet the effects and conſequences of the exertions of their willing, which by divine conſtitution are connected with their acts of will, and their voluntary exertions, they are ſaid to do or to be done by them, and are conſidered as in ſome ſenſe diſtinct from their volitions; ſo that when their will is carried into full execution, they may be ſaid to *do* what they *willed*, and ſo both to *will* and to *do*. And when any thing is willed, determined or choſen, which will cannot be immediately put into execution, but the act or event willed is future, and at a diſtance, when ſuch a choice is executed and effected, the perſon thus willing has both willed and done the action or event. Thus, when a man wills and determines to attend public worſhip devoutly the next ſabbath, or to viſit one of his neighbours and to give him ſome ſalutary advice and exhortation, or to give ſomething to the poor, he wills thoſe things; but they are not yet done, till by a courſe of acts of will they actually take place and are effected; and then he hath both willed and done them. Theſe obſervations may ſerve to ſhew the propriety of the diſtinction in the words before us between willing and doing, and what the diſtinction imports. The Apoſtle makes this ſame diſtinction more than once. He ſays, "To will is preſent with me; but how to perform that which is good I find not:" [*Rom.* vii. 18.] He found a ſtrong deſire and inclination to do many good things, and was hearty in willing them: but when he came to put what he willed into actual execution, he failed of coming up fully to what he willed, and felt the neceſſity that God ſhould work in him both to will and to do; and that when he faithfully executed his own will it was owing to the effectual grace of God, working in him not only to will, but to do it. He, writing to the Corinthians reſpecting a collection for the poor, ſays to them, "Now therefore perform the doing of it; that as there was a readineſs *to will*, ſo there may be *a performance* alſo:" [2 *Cor.* viii. 11.]

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5. The words which are added, "Of his good pleasure," remain yet to be explained. The meaning appears to be, that God worketh in men to will and to do as it pleases him, in the exercise of his sovereign goodness, who hath mercy on whom he will have mercy, and whom he will he hardeneth. In the beginning of this work, he chooses whom he will to be the subjects of it, not being under obligation to any; who are all wholly gone out of the way, their hearts being set against God, and every thing which has the nature of holiness. God waits not to have them turn and will that which is right, for this they would never do, if left to themselves, whatever means are used, and motives set before them, to persuade them to it. He first begins, and gives them a new heart, and creates them in Christ Jesus unto good works, and works in them to will and to do. Thus, not by works of righteousness which they had done (for they were dead in trespasses and sins, altogether rebellious) but according to his mercy, he saved them, by the washing of regeneration, and renewing of the Holy Ghost. And being thus made willing by the powerful operation of God on their hearts, according to his sovereign good pleasure; and having begun the good work, and they being brought into that covenant, according to which he has in his sovereign grace promised to carry it on till it is completed; he worketh in them to will and to do, so as to insure and perfect their salvation, in that manner and degree which is according to his sovereign good pleasure.

The next thing proposed is,

IV. To consider the force of the argument by which the foregoing exhortation is urged, or the reason given why Christians should work out their own salvation *with fear and trembling*, introduced and denoted by the particle FOR. "*For* it is God who worketh in you, both to will and to do, of his good pleasure."

In order to set this in the true and best light, what has been before observed must be kept in view, viz. that the design and force of the exhortation is not merely

ly or chiefly to work out their own ſalvation, but to do this in a particular way and manner, *with fear and trembling*. They began to work out their own ſalvation when the Apoſtle was with them, and had made great progreſs in this work, after he had left them; and he now enjoins upon them to go on in this great work, with fear and trembling, with ſelf diffidence, in a ſenſe of their own inſufficiency, and their conſtant abſolute dependence on God; with humility and poverty of ſpirit, and all thoſe feelings and exerciſes which are implied in this.

And he urges this upon them with this good and forcible reaſon, "*For* it is God who worketh in you, both to will and to do, of his good pleaſure." You have no ſufficiency of your own to do or will any thing right, but are always and entirely dependent on God, who is the author of every choice and exertion by which you are enabled to proceed in the Chriſtian life, who is above all controul, and acts as an abſolute ſovereign in this matter. And without him you can do nothing.

The ſenſe of this paſſage of ſcripture, as it has been now explained, may be expreſſed in the following words.

"My beloved fellow Chriſtians, as you gave up yourſelves to Jeſus Chriſt, to obey and ſerve him, when I was preſent with you, and have ſince, in my abſence, continued and made great advances in your obedience, I earneſtly exhort you to go on in your Chriſtian courſe with that holy fear and trembling which implies a ſenſe of the difficulty, greatneſs and importance of the work which is before you, keeping in view the eternal happineſs and glory which the goſpel ſets before you, and the infinite evil that awaits all who come ſhort, together with a conſtant conviction of your utter moral weakneſs, and inſufficiency for this work, and your entire and conſtant dependence on God for his powerful aſſiſtance in every ſtep you take; ſo that if he ſhould leave you to yourſelves you would certainly come ſhort and periſh.

periſh. Be on your conſtant guard againſt the leaſt confidence and truſt in yourſelves; be not high minded, becauſe you have been thus diſtinguiſhed, and have continued in your obedience, making advances in the Chriſtian life; but fear: be humble, and, in a conſtant ſenſe of your own utter inſufficiency, to do the leaſt thing towards your ſalvation, of yourſelves, put your whole truſt in God at all times for his conſtant influence and help, by which alone you will be able to work out your own ſalvation.

"This caution and exhortation to go on in your Chriſtian courſe with this fear and trembling is proper and important, as it is natural to man to be high minded, and to truſt in himſelf; and even Chriſtians, through their remaining depravity, are in danger of a criminal degree of this, in a meaſure forgetting their own weakneſs and inſufficiency and dependence on God, by which they greatly injure themſelves; and becauſe thus to fear and tremble is eſſential to the life of a Chriſtian, and cannot be exerciſed in too high a degree: for the more a Chriſtian has of this, the more beautiful and perfect is his character, and he will work out his own ſalvation with greater ſafety, ſtrength and activity. And there is the higheſt reaſon and the ſtrongeſt motive for Chriſtians to work out their own ſalvation with this fear and trembling, to which I am exhorting, becauſe they are in fact thus entirely and always dependent on God for every right motion of their heart, and all they do in this work, as all they will and do is the effect of a divine operation effectually working in them both to will and do, and that of his ſovereign good pleaſure, and entirely independent of them."

The Apoſtle exhorts them to maintain a humbling ſenſe of their depravity, moral weakneſs, and utter inſufficiency to the work in which they were engaged, and had made conſiderable progreſs, and their entire dependence on God for every right exerciſe of heart; to remember and realize that all they had attained to in the Chriſtian life was to be aſcribed to God working

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in them to will and to do it; and that they were ſtill thus dependent on him for every right choice and action; ſo that if God ſhould ceaſe to work in them both to will and to do, they would immediately fall away and periſh.

The Apoſtle was ſenſible of the diſpoſition in man to overlook his dependence on God every moment for every right motion of his will; and to truſt in himſelf, relying on his own ſtrength and ſufficiency: and he knew how fatal this diſpoſition was to the ſouls of men, if it were not counteracted and mortified; and that Chriſtians had need to be reminded of this. He therefore warns the Chriſtians at Philippi to avoid this fatal rock; and at the ſame time marks out the only true and ſafe way to heaven. And happy would it have been for many profeſſing Chriſtians ſince, if they had attended to, underſtood and conformed to this apoſtolic direction; who, contrary to this, have thought themſelves ſomething when they were nothing, and have attempted to work out their own ſalvation in their own ſtrength, relying on their own ſufficiency to will and to do; and conſequently never have willed and done any thing right, and really holy, but have periſhed in the fooliſh, preſumptuous attempt.

Having attempted to explain theſe words, under the four preceding heads, as was propoſed, we come now,

FIFTHLY, To improve the ſubject to practical purpoſes.

I. From the explanation which has been given of this important paſſage of ſcripture, if it be in any meaſure juſt and right, we learn that many have overlooked the true ſenſe of theſe words, have put a wrong meaning upon them, and perverted them to very bad purpoſes.

They are ſuch who aſſert man's ſufficiency to work out his own ſalvation of himſelf, without any diſtinguiſhing, efficacious influences of the Spirit of God, effectually working in him both to will and to do all that is neceſſary for his ſalvation; and deny that man is abſolutely and wholly dependent on God in working

out his own ſalvation; but hold that he who does this diſtinguiſhes himſelf, independent of Gods aſſiſtance, of which he has no more than they have who do not work out their own ſalvation. They who eſpouſe and contend for this ſentiment, are wont to appeal to the firſt words of the paſſage before us, "Work out your own ſalvation;" and think this ſufficiently ſupports their cauſe, and aſſerts that men are, of themſelves, to work out their own ſalvation, independent of any internal divine influence on their hearts effectually to will and to do. At the ſame time they wholly overlook the following words; or, if they are urged againſt them, they put an unnatural and forced meaning upon them, which has been ſhewn cannot be the meaning, in the foregoing explanation.

Thus this text is wholly perverted to ſupport and eſtabliſh a doctrine which has a moſt pernicious and deſtructive tendency, is contrary to the whole tenor of ſcripture, and directly contrary to this very text, taken together, and rightly underſtood; which, it is thought, clearly appears from the foregoing explanation. This is a moſt dangerous and deſtructive perverſion of ſcripture; for every one who believes in his heart he is ſo ſufficient to work out his own ſalvation, and to diſtinguiſh himſelf from thoſe who neglect to do this, without any diſtinguiſhing influences of the Spirit of God, working in him both to will and to do, and thinks he is thus by his own ſelf-ſufficiency actually working out his own ſalvation, is deceiving himſelf, and truſting in man, and making fleſh his arm; he is therefore accurſed, and will ſink into deſtruction. How lamentable that ſuch doctrine ſhould be advocated by any, yea, by *ſo many!* How unhappy that ſuch multitudes ſhould, through the moral blindneſs, ſelfiſhneſs and pride of their hearts, be led aſtray by theſe falſe teachers! Surely the blind are leading the blind, and they will both fall into the ditch of endleſs deſtruction!

There have been thoſe who have underſtood theſe words as a direction to unrenewed ſinners to begin and work

work out their own ſalvation, enforced with a ſtrong encouragement, if not a promiſe, that if they thus ſet out in earneſt, and do what is called *their part*, God will give them all needed aſſiſtance to go on ſo as to obtain ſalvation, or do *his part*. This they underſtand by his working in them both to will and to do. Thus, according to them, God waits to have them ſet out and begin to will and to do; and then he ſets in to aſſiſt them to go on. It is ſufficient to ſhew every conſiderate perſon, ſurely, that to put ſuch a meaning on theſe words, is wholly to pervert them, only to mention it. The words are ſpoken to Chriſtians, in whom God had already began a good work, by working in them to will and to do, and who had made great progreſs in the Chriſtian life. And what he teaches them is their own inſufficiency to will and to do, and that they did not begin in this work till God firſt wrought in them both to will and to do; nor go one ſtep without his efficacious agency on their hearts; and therefore they ought to maintain a humbling ſenſe of this on their minds, and put their whole truſt in God, who only can work in them to will and to do that by which they muſt work out their own ſalvation. To apply theſe words to ſinners, to encourage them to a proud conceit of their own moral ſtrength and ſufficiency, and to truſt in themſelves to work out their own ſalvation, is as direct and groſs a perverſion of them as can well be imagined.

There are others, who, though they have rightly conſidered the exhortation in the text to be addreſſed to Chriſtians, yet have miſtaken the proper meaning and force of the exhortation, of fear and trembling, and of the reaſon given by which the exhortation is urged; and therefore have overlooked the true ſenſe of the text, and really perverted it. Without attending to the true, or any preciſe and determinate meaning to fear and trembling, they conſider the exhortation to Chriſtians to work out their own ſalvation, as directing them to do what they call *their part*, which they are to perform, without taking any notice of the *manner* in which

which they are exhorted to do it; and conſequently repreſent God's working in them to will and to do, rather as the conſequence of their working, in which he will aſſiſt them in their endeavours to work out their own ſalvation: ſo that the meaning of theſe words, according to them, is this: Work out your own ſalvation, do your part, for then and on this condition God will do *his part*, and work in you both to will and to do.

He who has attended to and underſtood the explanation of theſe words which has been attempted in the preceding diſcourſes, and approves of it, muſt be ſenſible that the above repreſentation of the meaning of the text wholly overlooks the true deſign and force of it, and is a total perverſion of it, and may juſtly be ſaid to "darken counſel by words without knowledge."

On the whole, it appears that they who attend only to the firſt part of the paſſage which has been explained, as exhorting men to work out their own ſalvation, without bringing into view the following words, not attending to the words *fear and trembling*, as expreſſing the manner in which this work is to be done, or giving a wrong ſenſe to them, have not given the true import and force of the exhortation, and have not improved it to promote the purpoſe deſigned by it; and many have in this way perverted it to eſtabliſh deluſion and falſehood. And, that they alſo who have attended to the laſt words, "For it is God who worketh in you both to will and to do," without attending to their connection with the foregoing exhortation, and the true meaning of fear and trembling, and the force of the reaſon and argument from thence, expreſſed in the particle FOR, have, at beſt, not given the true and important meaning of the whole paſſage; and have overlooked the deſign and force of it, and the moſt intereſting and practical truths contained in it; if they have not improved it to promote error and deluſion.

In ſhort, this text cannot be underſtood, unleſs it be conſidered in the connection of each part of it, and in the true meaning of every expreſſion and word contained

tained in it. But when this is done with proper care and judgment, it will be found to be clear, eaſy, conſiſtent, and harmonious, and to exhibit true religion, both in theory and practice, and the real character of a Chriſtian, as diſtinguiſhed from all counterfeits.

In this view, the preceding particular explanation has been attempted, and is to be yet farther improved.

II. From this paſſage of ſcripture, as it has been explained, ſeveral doctrines are expreſſed or implied, and the objections which have been made to them appear to be wholly without foundation, and very unreaſonable. Some of theſe will be particularly mentioned and conſidered.

1. As God is here ſaid to produce every good volition and exerciſe in the Chriſtian by which he works out his own ſalvation, it has been objected, that according to this the work is all done by God, and not by the Chriſtian, which renders the text, taken together, wholly inconſiſtent and abſurd: as if it were ſaid, "Work out your own ſalvation; but at the ſame time remember that you can do nothing, and really have nothing to do; for it is God who muſt do all, by producing the will and the deed!"

The mere mentioning of this objection is ſufficient to expoſe the unreaſonableneſs and abſurdity of it. If God works in them to will and to do, then they both will and do; and this is as much their own will and deed, as much their own exertion and work, as it could be, were there no previous exertion of God, as neceſſary in order to their thus willing and doing. Chriſtians do nothing in working out their own ſalvation till they begin to will and act; and when they do this, it is as much their own act and deed, as in the nature of things any thing that is willed and done can be, whatever God may do in working in them thus to will and to do. The latter is the work of God, and not theirs, the former is as much their own exertion and work, as if God did nothing in them, and is entirely diſtinct from what God does. Their own exertions, their willing and

and doing, in working out their own ſalvation, are as neceſſary as if they were independent on God, and he did not work in them to will and to do: and therefore this is no reaſon why they ſhould not will and work, but ſit ſtill and do nothing; but is a good reaſon why they ſhould work, and do what they do with fear and trembling, not truſting in themſelves, but in God alone, to enable them to go through and perfect this work.

2. This doctrine of abſolute dependence on God for every volition and exertion in working out our own ſalvation, which is implied and aſſerted in the explanation which has been given of this text, has been repreſented and objected to as a very diſcouraging doctrine, tending to lead perſons to ſit ſtill, and not attempt to do any thing towards their ſalvation.

It is granted that the view of the text which has been given does tend to diſcourage perſons from attempting to work out their own ſalvation in their *own* ſtrength and ſufficiency, independent of God, and his effectual operation on their hearts to will and to do; and will effectually do it, where it has its proper influence on the hearts of men. But this affords no real ground of objection to the doctrine, but is rather in favour of it. It is neceſſary that men ſhould be diſcouraged from working out their ſalvation in this way, and relinquiſh it, in order to their being ſaved; and the ſooner and more thoroughly they are diſcouraged, the better. Such diſcouragement is indeed given in the text, and in a vaſt number of other paſſages in the Bible, being rightly underſtood; for men are every where in ſcripture repreſented as wholly dependent on God for the effectual influences of the Holy Spirit in order to do that which is neceſſary to be done by them for their ſalvation.

But to him who feels his own moral depravity and utter inſufficiency to will and do any thing by which he may be ſaved, without the powerful operations of God to work in him to will to do it, this doctrine will open

open the only ground of hope and encouragement to do or attempt to do any thing. If a child or any perſon were called to do ſome great thing, to which he knew he was wholly unequal, being utterly inſufficient to ſuch a work of himſelf, he would not have any courage to attempt it, until he knew that one ſtood by him who was able and promiſed to give him all neceſſary aſſiſtance, if he would rely wholly on him for it; but this would give him ſufficient encouragement to engage in the work with hope of ſucceſs; and would be the only ground of encouragement and hope.

Jeſus Chriſt ſaid to his diſciples, "Without me ye can do nothing." Surely he did not ſay this to diſcourage them, and lead them to ſit ſtill and do nothing; but to encourage them to truſt in him, and to engage in the work aſſigned to them with alacrity, courage and hope. The apoſtle Paul knew that he was what he was by the grace of God, working mightily and effectually in him both to will and to do; that he had no ſufficiency of himſelf for any good thing, but that all his ſufficiency was of God; that without the powerful aſſiſtance of Chriſt he could do nothing. Did this diſcourage him, from attempting to do any thing? No; directly the contrary: from this he took his ſole encouragement, and was animated to purſue his work with activity and diligence, and laboured more than all the other apoſtles, knowing that through Chriſt who ſtrengthened him he could do all things.

Thus it appears not only that the objection under conſideration is altogether without any ground or reaſon, but that it is made againſt a paſſage of ſcripture which, according to the explanation which has been given, affords the only ground of hope to ſinners, and gives ſufficient and the only encouragement to work out our own ſalvation with fear and trembling; and which does contain a complete anſwer to the objection, and that it is as direct, great and miſchievous a perverſion and abuſe of the text, as can be imagined. Let it therefore be rejected by all with abhorrence, and ſilenced forever.

3. The

3. The objection which has been made, that this doctrine of man's dependence on the powerful operation of God for every virtuous and holy act of will, so that it is really produced by him, and could not exist did not God work in him both to will and to do, is inconsistent with human liberty, and makes man a mere machine, who is acted upon in all he wills and does, is really answered and refuted in the words themselves, as they have been explained.

Human liberty consists in willing and doing, or in acting voluntarily. To act freely, and to act voluntarily, are synonimous terms, meaning the same thing; and it is impossible to exercise or conceive of any other real liberty than this. All the liberty of any moral agent consists in acting voluntarily. There is no other liberty in nature possible. Therefore liberty does not consist in any thing which takes place before the actual exertion of willing; man does not, he cannot, exercise freedom antecedent to his acting voluntarily, or when he ceases to will and to do. Therefore, when God worketh in men to will and do what otherwise they would not will and do, their liberty is so far from being obstructed by this, that it is promoted, and the consequence is, their actually willing and doing, and consequently exercising all the liberty of which any creature is or can be made capable. How groundless and unreasonable then is this objection! It amounts to this, that man cannot be free in that which is the only exercise of liberty, because he never would have acted thus freely in that instance, did not God by working in him induce him to exercise all the freedom of which he is capable in actually willing and doing.

It is evident that many puzzle and bewilder themselves about human liberty, and think many facts and doctrines contained in the Bible to be inconsistent with liberty; or at least confess themselves unable to conceive how they can be consistent with it, because they have never attended so much to the nature of human liberty as to be able to determine precisely in what it does consist, and imagine

imagine it conſiſts in ſomething, of which they have no clear and conſiſtent idea, and which is really impoſſible, and never did or can exiſt. If they would carefully conſult their own feelings to find what that is which they feel and exerciſe when they conſider themſelves perfectly free in what they do, they would find that when they acted voluntarily or of choice, and did as they pleaſed, they acted freely, and poſſeſſed all the freedom they could deſire, or have any conſiſtent conception of; therefore, that though God work in them to will and to do, or whatever were the previous cauſe of their willing and acting as they did, yet they were perfectly free in their choice and conduct; and that it was as much their own will and choice, as it could be on any ſuppoſition whatever, and they themſelves wholly accountable for what they will and do.

This paſſage therefore is ſo far from being inconſiſtent with human liberty, that it ſuppoſes and aſſerts that perſons have and exerciſe all the liberty in the practice of morality and religion of which man is capable, and carries in the face of it a complete confutation of the objection under conſideration. And let no one imagine he has not all the freedom that is deſirable, or that, in the nature of things, can be poſſeſſed and exerciſed, while he feels and knows that he acts voluntarily, or does as he pleaſes. And if he does both will and do that which is really working out his own ſalvation, let him aſcribe it wholly to the ſovereign mercy of God, who worketh in him thus to will and do, of his good pleaſure.

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# Sermon XIII.

Phil. ii. 12, 13. *Work out your own salvation with fear and trembling: for it is God who worketh in you, both to will and to do, of his good pleasure.*

HAVING considered three objections to the text, as it has been explained, in the preceding discourse, it is proposed in this to answer several more.

4. It is objected, that if men are not and cannot be willing to work out their own salvation, unless God first work in them to will and do, then they cannot be blameable for not willing and doing.

To this objection there is a full solution and answer in the words to which it is made. If none do any thing towards working out their own salvation, till God worketh in them to will and to do, this supposes that previous to this they are unwilling; and that this unwillingness, or opposition of will to this work, is the only difficulty in the way of their willing and doing that by which they would be saved; and were it not for this opposition of heart or will to do that by which they would be saved, there would be no need that God should thus work in them to will and to do, which otherwise they voluntarily refuse to do. It is therefore supposed that they act freely in willing and doing that which is contrary to working out their salvation, and consequently that they are wholly blameable for voluntarily opposing that by which they might be saved, if they were willing to comply with it. For we have no other idea of blame or crime, but that which consists in willing and doing that which is contrary to reason and truth, and the command of God, when nothing is in the way of willing and doing that which is right and wise, but their unwillingness or opposition of heart or will to that which is required. And the greater

er the degree of oppoſition of will there is to that which is right and good, and the ſtronger the propenſity and inclination is to the contrary, the more blameable and guilty ſuch perſons appear to be to all who exerciſe reaſon or common ſenſe. And the more fixed in the ſtrong and conſtant oppoſition of their hearts they are to that which is wiſe and good, and propenſity to do evil, ſo that they are perfectly deaf to all warnings and counſels and motives which can be ſet before them to chooſe and do that which is right, and would make them happy, and they cannot be reclaimed by any means whatſoever that can be uſed with them; the more odious and blameworthy they are, according to the feelings, judgment and conſent of all.

If a child be diſobedient to his parents, and wholly refuſes to pay any reſpect to them and regard their dictates, the more obſtinate he appears to be, and fixed in his rebellion, under all poſſible means uſed with him to reclaim him, this is ſo far from being any excuſe, or extenuation of his blame or guilt, that it is conſidered by all, unleſs it be thoſe who are joined with him in the ſame diſobedience, as an aggravation of his guilt. Who ever thought of excuſing a murderer or thief, and could think him blameleſs or the leſs guilty, becauſe he had long perſiſted in his evil practices, and could not be reclaimed by all the perſuaſions, threats and ſevere corrections which could be adminiſtered or deviſed? Can any one avoid thinking him the worſe, and more odious and blameable, the more his inclination to murder or ſteal is proved to be fixed and incurable? It is poſſible the perſon himſelf might plead this as an excuſe; and his companions in the ſame wickedneſs might join with him in exculpating him and themſelves, becauſe they had ſuch a ſtrong inclination to perſiſt in their practices, and were ſo utterly averſe from a reformation, and ſo far from having the leaſt diſpoſition to any thing of the kind, that they could not be willing to hearken to advice, and reform. But all who are not murderers nor thieves would conſider their attempting

tempting to make such an excuse as an aggravation of their crimes, and an increase of their blameworthiness.

This is applicable to the case before us, and may serve to illustrate it. Mankind are all rebels against God, and are sunk into total moral depravity, in which they have a strong, fixed and incurable propensity to rebellion, and a proportionable aversion from God and holiness, and *will not* come to Christ that they might be saved. This depravity and obstinacy is *incurable*, that is, by any thing in themselves; for their whole inclination, and all their exertions, are an opposition to turning to God, or a willingness to embrace the gospel; it is incurable by any means that can be used with them, or by any thing that can be done for them by any creature. The removal of this rebellious disposition is infinitely out of the reach of the power of men or angels. He only can do it who created all things, and is able to take away the hard, obstinate heart, and give an obedient one, and work in men to will and to do that to which they are naturally totally averse. Nothing is or can be in the way to prevent any persons being willing to embrace the gospel, but a contrary will and choice, and aversion of heart from Jesus Christ and the gospel. And if this be not in the nature of it criminal, and blameable in every degree of it, then there can be no such thing as blame or crime in nature. And if the strong degree of opposition to that which is right and wise, and inclination to the contrary so as to render it incurable, in the sense explained, does render the person innocent; then every the least degree of such inclination is not criminal, so there can be no such thing as sin; unless men can sin without any inclination to sin, and may incur blame when they exercise no choice.

All this is supposed and really asserted in our text: That mankind are wholly and obstinately opposed in their will and affections to that which is right and wise, and necessary to be chosen, in order to their salvation; that this is the only and all the difficulty in the way of their salvation, and is the only thing which renders it

necessary

neceſſary that God ſhould powerfully work in them to make them willing to embrace the way of ſalvation. The objection is therefore contrary to the paſſage objected to, which when conſidered contains a full anſwer to it, and the objection appears not to have the leaſt foundation, if all blame conſiſts wholly in having no inclination to that which is right and wiſe, and in an inclination and choice which is directly contrary: and nothing can be blameable but this: and the ſtronger this inclination is, and the more there is of it, the more and greater is the guilt; which no man can deny without contradicting the plaineſt dictates of reaſon and common ſenſe.

When it is ſaid in the objection, that if men *cannot* embrace the goſpel unleſs God work in them to will and do it, this muſt render them blameleſs, if by this any difficulty is deſigned to be expreſſed which does not wholly conſiſt in their unwillingneſs to this, and is not the ſame with their *will not*, it is not true that they *cannot*; for, as has been obſerved, there can be no other bar in the way of their embracing the goſpel, but a fixed oppoſition of will to it; and this is ſuppoſed and even aſſerted in the text, as nothing elſe or more is neceſſary to work out their ſalvation but a *will* to do it. And when it is ſaid they *cannot* be willing, the meaning is, that they are wholly deſtitute of the leaſt inclination or real deſire to comply, and have ſuch a ſtrong, fixed oppoſition of will to it, that they cannot be willing to embrace the goſpel, ſuch oppoſition of will being entirely inconſiſtent with it, ſo long as it continues; and they being without the leaſt inclination or deſire to remove this oppoſition, but acquieſce in it with all their hearts, it cannot be removed by any thing ſhort of the power of God working in them to will and to do. But if this be all that the objector means by his *cannot*, this is ſo far from being any excuſe for not being willing to embrace the goſpel, that it is the very thing in which all blame conſiſts; and the more there is of this *will not*, and the ſtronger the inclination is to oppoſe and reject the goſpel,

goſpel, the greater is the guilt and blameworthineſs, as has been before obſerved, and cannot be denied by any who will allow that there is any ſuch thing as guilt and blame in nature. In this ſenſe the words of Chriſt are to be underſtood, when he ſays, "No man can come to me, except the Father who hath ſent me draw him:" [*John* vi. 44.] The Saviour of the world does not ſay this to excuſe men as blameleſs in not coming to him, but rather to expreſs their total depravity and the greatneſs of their guilt, aſſerting that there is ſuch oppoſition of the will or heart of all men naturally to him, that they are diſpoſed to reject the goſpel, and, while this is the caſe, no man can with ſuch an heart come to Chriſt, as this implies a contradiction. And this depravity and oppoſition of heart is ſo great and fixed, that no man will come to him, unleſs it be removed by the power of God working in him to will and do that which he would otherwiſe continue utterly to refuſe. That theſe words are thus to be underſtood is certain from what Chriſt ſaith elſewhere on this ſubject. He ſaid to the Jews, "Ye *will not* come to me, that ye might have life. How *can* ye believe, who receive honour one of another, and ſeek not the honour that cometh from God only?" In which words he aſſerts, that the only thing in the way of their coming to him was, that it was contrary to their inclination or will; and that their inability to believe on him, which is the ſame with coming to him, or the only reaſon why they *could not* believe, was nothing but an oppoſite inclination to deſire and ſeek that which was contrary to believing on him and coming to him. We are certain that Jeſus Chriſt did conſider this inability to come to him, though ſo fixed and great that it could not be removed by any power ſhort of that Divine Energy which can give a new heart, as any excuſe for not coming to him; for he aſſerts their not believing on him and refuſing to come to him to be the greateſt crime, for which they might juſtly be condemned to periſh forever. Hear his words. "He that *believeth not*, is condemned already, *becauſe* he hath not believed

lieved on the name of the only begotten Son of God. And this is the condemnation, that light is come into the world, and men loved darkneſs rather than light, becauſe their deeds were evil. And when he (the Spirit) is come, he will reprove the world of ſin, *becauſe they believe not on me.*"

If they who make the objection under conſideration would attend to all this, and conſider it well, they would know that they were as really objecting againſt Jeſus Chriſt himſelf, as againſt our text, as it has been explained; for he ſaith the ſame things in the words which have been cited. And they would at the ſame time be convinced that the objection is contrary to all reaſon and the common ſenſe of mankind, and implies the greateſt abſurdity, and contradiction to all moral truth.

Many bewilder themſelves, and put a ſtumbling block before their faces, and make great and hurtful miſtakes, by uſing the words *cannot* and *inability* in a ſenſe which is inconſiſtent with blame, and wholly excuſes for not doing what a perſon cannot do. That which a perſon cannot do, though ever ſo much inclined to do it, and however willing he is to do it, were it in his power, he cannot be blamed for not doing. And this is the ſenſe in which mankind commonly uſe the words cannot and inability. But when theſe words are uſed in a moral ſenſe, ſo as to imply no difficulty in complying with what is required, but want of an inclination and deſire to do it, or an actual oppoſition of will to it, which is quite a different and oppoſite ſenſe from the other; ſuch a want of ability or power to comply with that which is reaſonable and right, does not excuſe a refuſal to comply, but neceſſarily implies blame, and the perſon is criminal in proportion to the degree of his inability to comply, or the ſtrength and fixedneſs of the oppoſition of his heart to that which is required, in which all the difficulty of this compliance conſiſts.

This may be illuſtrated by the following inſtance: A poor man, a real object of charity, ſuffering for want of the

the neceſſaries of life, who muſt periſh ſoon if he had not ſpeedy relief, begged the compaſſion and help of two neighbours who then were together. One of them was a kind, benevolent man, and felt for the ſufferer, and ardently wiſhed it were in his power to relieve him; but he was poor himſelf, and had nothing to give to his diſtreſſed brother. The other was rich, and able immediately to help the ſuffering, periſhing man, if he had been willing to do it; but he was a ſtranger to benevolence, and had the greateſt averſion from giving or doing any thing for the relief of any of his fellow-men, and never had felt the leaſt compaſſion to the diſtreſſed, or given ſo much as a penny for the relief of any, though he had many opportunities to do it, and not a few had periſhed by his refuſing to afford them any help. He therefore in this inſtance hardened his heart, and felt not the leaſt compaſſion for the periſhing man, and refuſed to ſave this beggar from death, which was in his power, had he been willing to give him what he could eaſily ſpare.

Who can avoid pronouncing the former blameleſs, or conſidering the latter as very criminal and blameworthy? And the farther he was from any inclination to help the diſtreſſed, and the more fixed and obſtinately ſet he was againſt giving any thing to the poor, the more vile and criminal he muſt appear to all. The latter cannot be liberal, and delight in diſtributing what he poſſeſſes, until he has a new heart, and is poſſeſſed with a diſpoſition directly contrary to that which now governs him in all his thoughts and deſires. And his heart is wholly and with all its ſtrength oppoſed to a benevolent, generous heart, and therefore he cannot have the leaſt inclination and deſire to have ſuch a heart, but is entirely ſatisfied and pleaſed with his preſent ſelfiſh diſpoſition. And if he ſhould pretend to deſire and attempt to obtain a good, benevolent heart, all his deſires and attempts would really be nothing but the exerciſe of his ſelfiſhneſs, and the gratification of his evil, covetous diſpoſition; and therefore would be nothing but real oppoſition

poſition to a good heart. So that it may be truly ſaid of him, he is utterly unable to change his own heart from a ſelfiſh to a benevolent one. Yet who can think him the leſs criminal and blameable on this account? Muſt not all look upon him as guilty and odious in proportion to the fixed ſtrength of his ſelfiſh, cruel diſpoſition, and his inability by this to become benevolent and kind?

The difficulty which is in the way of his helping the poor man may be as great, and his inability to do a generous action as real and as much inſurmountable and immoveable by him, for the reaſon which has been mentioned, as the inability of the former to relieve him. It may be ſaid, agreeable to truth, of both of them, that they *cannot* relieve the diſtreſſed ſufferer. But their inability is ſo entirely different, and of ſo oppoſite a nature and kind, that the inability of the former excuſes, and that of the latter is ſo far from excuſing, that it is the very thing in which his crime and blame conſiſts. And they who attend to all that has been offered or can be ſaid on this point, and yet will not ſee the difference and oppoſition between theſe two kinds of inability, but perſiſt in aſſerting that there is no difference, and that they equally render a man blameleſs for not doing what he is unable to do; that the inability of the latter of theſe two men to relieve a diſtreſſed perſon is as blameleſs and excuſeable, as that of the former; are not capable of being reaſoned with or of making any proper uſe of common ſenſe, which cannot be accounted for but by ſuppoſing that their inability to ſee and make this diſtinction, and reaſon properly upon it, is not owing to any defect in their natural capacity and reaſoning powers, but to an inclination of heart, or propenſity of will, which perverts their reaſon, and ſhuts their eyes againſt the light of truth, ſo that they *cannot* ſee it, however clearly it ſhines; which is the criminal inability that has been deſcribed.

Every degree of inclination to ſin is oppoſition to the contrary, and is a difficulty in the way of a holy inclina-

tion and choice; and the former neceſſarily weakens the latter in proportion to the degree of it, ſo that perfect holineſs cannot be exerciſed, ſo long as any degree of the oppoſite inclination exiſts. And the difficulty or inability to be perfectly holy is greater or leſs in proportion to the greater or leſs degree of the oppoſite inclination to ſin. This, the apoſtle Paul ſays, is the caſe with Chriſtians in this world: "The fleſh luſteth againſt the Spirit, and the Spirit againſt the fleſh: and theſe are contrary the one to the other; ſo that ye *cannot* do the things that ye would:" [*Gal.* v. 17.] None will ſuppoſe, it is preſumed, that the Apoſtle ſaid this to excuſe Chriſtians for not being perfectly holy, or deſigned to repreſent the luſting of the fleſh, or inclination to ſin, as blameleſs, by ſaying that they *could not* do the things that they would; for if the luſting of the fleſh be not ſinful and blameable, then there cannot be any ſuch thing as ſin or blame. When the Apoſtle ſays, "Ye cannot do the things that ye would," he does not offer this as an excuſe for their not doing them; ſince all the difficulty in the way of their doing them was their ſin: it was therefore a wholly blameable, ſinful *cannot*: it was a difficulty and inability to be perfectly holy which was criminal and wholly blameable in every degree of it, and that too in proportion to the ſtrength and degree. Chriſtians had a degree of holineſs which was exerciſed in oppoſing all ſinful inclination, and deſiring to be perfectly holy. They would be, they had a deſire to be, ſo holy as to do all the things which were required of them in a perfect manner and degree; but a contrary propenſity to ſin ſtill worked in them, and rendered them unable to do what they would, ſo that in every exertion they fell ſhort. This therefore was a ſinful inability, a *cannot* wholly blameable; for it conſiſted in their inclination to ſin.

The unregenerate ſinner is nothing but fleſh, in the Apoſtle's ſenſe of the word here, and in many other places, that is, corrupt human nature. All his inclinations and deſires are luſts of the fleſh, in which there is

no

no good thing. This his carnal mind is enmity againſt God, is not ſubject to the law of God, neither indeed *can be*. He has no inclination or deſire to be holy, to oppoſe the carnal mind, which therefore has the whole dominion in his heart, and reigns there without controul. The difficulty and inability he is under to will and to do that which is good is total and complete: and as the Chriſtian cannot do the things that he would, cannot be perfectly holy, the ſinner cannot have the leaſt inclination or deſire to be holy, or will and do any thing towards his ſalvation. And as the partial inability in the Chriſtian to be perfectly holy is altogether his ſin, and conſiſts in it; ſo the total inability to will and to do that which is holy in the ſinner is all of it his ſin, and therefore conſiſts wholly in that which is blameworthy. His inability, his cannot, is all ſin and nothing elſe. And to offer this as an excuſe, as rendering the ſinner wholly blameleſs, is ſo unreaſonable, abſurd and perverſe, that it cannot be done by an honeſt, diſcerning mind.

So much has been ſaid in anſwer to this objection, perhaps too much, and ſome repetitions have been made, it may be too many, becauſe it is ſo much in the mouths of many, originates from deluſion, and has a moſt pernicious tendency.

5. The objection which is often made, that it is unreaſonable to command or exhort ſinners to do that which they have no power to do, and cannot do unleſs aſſiſted and enabled to do it by the Spirit of God, appears to be groundleſs, from our text itſelf, when rightly underſtood; and is fully refuted in the anſwer to the laſt objection. When it is well underſtood what is meant by want of power to obey what is commanded, and comply with the exhortation; that it means nothing but want of will, and an oppoſite inclination; the objection vaniſhes, as nothing to the purpoſe. It means a want of ability to obey, which is itſelf ſin, and that in which blameableneſs conſiſts, and therefore cannot be an excuſe for not obeying. Therefore,

fore, as this kind of inability is only a ſinful oppoſition of heart to that which is right and duty, it does not remove or leſſen the obligation to obedience and to comply with duty. Surely none can think that a perſon may not with reaſon and propriety be exhorted and commanded to do that which is right and his duty, and for his intereſt to do, merely becauſe he is not willing to do it. For if ſo, then no man may be commanded or exhorted to that which he is not inclined or willing to do; which denies the exiſtence of any law, except it be a man's own inclination and will. If God may not command a creature to do what he is not willing to do, there is an end to all divine laws, and moral government, and a man's own inclination and will is his only law or rule of conduct; conſequently there can be no ſin, unleſs it be doing that which is contrary to a perſon's will and choice, which is impoſſible.

But it may be aſked, Where is the propriety of commanding or exhorting ſinners to do that which they never will do, unleſs they have a new heart given to them by God, and he work in them to will and do it; or what end will this anſwer?

*Reply.* The reaſon and propriety of this has been already ſhown; and that if this were not reaſonable and proper, there can be no ſuch thing as law and moral government. And this is ſuited, and even neceſſary, to anſwer the following ends.

*Firſt.* If there were no law and commands, and theſe were not ſet before ſinners, pointing out their duty, and urging them to do what is neceſſary to their ſalvation, they could not know what the law is, and what is their duty, and what is neceſſary to be done by them in order to be ſaved; which is important and neceſſary. Without this they would not be under advantage to know the character of God, of Jeſus Chriſt, nor their own character, nor what they muſt be and do to be ſaved. "For how ſhall they believe in him of whom they have not heard? and how ſhall they hear without a preacher?"

*Second.*

*Second.* If commands and exhortations to obedience were not applied to ſinners, they would not know that they are ſinners, and how depraved and corrupt they are, and how oppoſite their hearts are to the goſpel, and that they are undone forever, unleſs ſovereign grace give them a new heart, and make them willing in the day of divine power; all which it is important and even neceſſary the ſinner ſhould know, in order to his being ſaved. The apoſtle Paul ſaid, "I had not known ſin, but by the law:" and this is true of every one; for by the law is the knowledge of ſin. And they cannot know that their hearts are ſtrongly oppoſed to the goſpel, the way of ſalvation by Jeſus Chriſt, until they have the offer, and are invited and exhorted to believe on him.

*Third.* Therefore the goſpel is to be preached to all men, and every man is to be inſtructed, warned and exhorted to believe, that he may eſcape the wrath to come, whether they will *hear*, or whether they will *forbear*, or refuſe to hear. This is the way which God takes to anſwer his wiſe, benevolent purpoſes. They to whom he in his wiſdom is pleaſed to give a heart to believe, will embrace the goſpel, and be ſaved; and under a conviction of their guilty, loſt ſtate by nature, and that they ſhould have juſtly periſhed, had not God given them a heart to believe, they will aſcribe the whole of their ſalvation to ſovereign grace, and give all the glory of it to God forever. They who do not hear and embrace the goſpel, but, according to the criminal choice of their own hearts, reject the great ſalvation, will periſh, under the aggravated guilt of ſlighting Jeſus Chriſt, and abuſing his grace and love, and will exhibit a ſtriking manifeſtation of the exceeding, amazing depravity and wickedneſs of the human heart, and of the juſtice of God in their eternal deſtruction.

It has been obſerved, that the text contains an anſwer to the objection now under conſideration, and it has been ſhewn how it is anſwered. But an anſwer is found in it, in another view of it. The Apoſtle tells Chriſtians that if God did not work in them to will and to do, they

they would not will and do any thing towards their own ſalvation; and at the ſame time exhorts both to will and to do, and work out their own ſalvation with fear and trembling. This is directly in the face of the objection. For though they could have no will to work, unleſs God gave it to them; yet they are exhorted and commanded to be willing and to work out their own ſalvation. Why then may not the ſinner, who can have no will to do any thing towards his ſalvation, unleſs God work it in him, be exhorted and commanded to will and to do? Is it poſſible to make any objection to this, which is not really againſt the exhortation in the text?

6. It may be further objected, that the text, as it has been explained, implies the doctrine of the certain perſeverance of all true Chriſtians, unto eternal life; which doctrine tends to make them who think themſelves Chriſtians careleſs about their ſalvation, and leads them to indulge themſelves in ſin, ſince, having once believed, they ſhall be ſaved, whatever life they live.

*Anſwer.* The text, as it has been underſtood, it is granted, does imply the doctrine of the perſeverance of all real Chriſtians: for if they depend wholly on God to renew their will to holy exerciſes, by which they are born again, made new creatures, and created in Chriſt Jeſus unto good works, there is no reaſon to think he will forſake ſuch a work, and ſuffer it to come to nothing; as there is an apparent inconſiſtency in this: it may therefore be relied upon as certain, that Infinite Wiſdom and Unchangeable Power and Goodneſs never begins this great and good work, by which men are brought into a ſtate of ſalvation, and become real friends to God, and are pardoned and have his favour, without a deſign to carry it on till it is completed in their perfect holineſs and endleſs happineſs, as this work from beginning to end depends wholly on him. The contrary ſuppoſition appears moſt unreaſonable, and unworthy of God, and diſhonourable to him. Moreover, the expreſſion itſelf denotes a conſtant work which God is carrying on in Chriſtians, without ceaſing or relinquiſhing it. "It

is

is God who *worketh* in you to will and to do;" that is, continually, not at one time only, but always, to the end of life. It is not said, God did once work in them, or that he did work in them sometimes, but not always; but he *worketh* in you, as being common to all Christians, and at all times. And in this view only it can be a reason and encouragement to work out their own salvation with fear and trembling, as it has been explained.

But if the doctrine of the certain perseverance of all true Christians to final salvation were not implied in the words of the text, when considered alone, yet it is established with the utmost certainty when they are viewed in connection with what the Apostle had before said to these Christians in this epistle. His words are, "Being confident of this very thing, that he who hath begun a good work in you will perform it until the day of Jesus Christ:" [chap. i. 5, 6.] The good work is that spoken of in the text, by which God was working in them both to will and to do. The Apostle, under inspiration, was confident, which amounts to a certainty, that wherever he begins this work, he will carry it on to perfection. We therefore may be confident, and certain, that wherever God begins to work in men to will and to do that which is good and holy, he designs to carry this work on to perfection; that he will completely finish what he once begins. And this same truth is abundantly asserted, many ways, in the Bible, to which it is needless now particularly to attend.

It is objected to this doctrine, that it tends to make Christians careless, and is a temptation to indulge to sin, seeing, according to this doctrine, their salvation is secured to them, let them live as they will. An answer to this is found in the words of the text, in which this doctrine is contained, as has been shewn: for at the same time Christians are told that God had begun a good work in them, which he would finish, carrying it on to perfection, they are exhorted to work out their salvation with fear and trembling; and that too for this very reason, that God was working in them so as effectually

ly to ſecure ſalvation to them. They are informed that their working out their own ſalvation in this particular manner was as neceſſary to their ſalvation, as if God did not intend their ſalvation; that there was no other way to be ſaved; and that God thus working in them both to will and to do, with an intention to go on and perfect it, was the only encouragement, and a ſtrong and cogent motive, thus to work out their own ſalvation.

The objection before us is therefore made in direct oppoſition to the words of the text, in which the doctrine of the ſaints' perſeverance is improved as a motive to every Chriſtian duty in the practice of real holineſs: it is therefore impoſſible to encourage the contrary. This apoſtle always ſpeaks in the ſame ſtrain. He ſays of himſelf, in this ſame epiſtle, "Not as though I had already attained, either were already perfect; but I follow after, if that I may apprehend that for which I am alſo apprehended of Chriſt Jeſus. Reaching forth unto thoſe things which are before, I preſs towards the mark, for the prize of the high calling of God in Chriſt Jeſus." The Apoſtle conſidered himſelf as apprehended, or laid hold of, by Jeſus Chriſt, when he was converted and became a Chriſtian, with intent to keep his hold of him till he had brought him to poſſeſs the prize of eternal life. This was ſo far from making him careleſs and inactive in the duties of the Chriſtian life, that he improved it as an encouragement and motive to activity, zeal and engagedneſs in running the Chriſtian race, that he might obtain perfect holineſs, and the prize which his Saviour intended for him, and ſo work out his own ſalvation, of which he was aſſured, by what Jeſus Chriſt had already done for him by working in him both to will and to do thoſe things which accompany ſalvation, being infallibly connected with it. In the ſame view he writes to the Chriſtians at Theſſalonica: "Let us who are of the day be ſober, putting on the breaſtplate of faith and love, and for an helmet the hope of ſalvation. For God hath not appointed us to wrath, but to obtain ſalvation by our Lord Jeſus Chriſt." Here he writes in the

the ſame manner as in our text. He urges them to the practice of Chriſtian holineſs, from the encouragement and motive that God had deſigned them for ſalvation, giving them the character of his children, by which they were intereſted in the everlaſting covenant of grace, by which ſalvation was inſured to them.

This objection not only has an anſwer in theſe, and innumerable other paſſages of ſcripture, but it is alſo confuted by the inconſiſtency and unreaſonableneſs of it. It carries this inconſiſtency in it, that if the perſeverance of Chriſtians in holineſs is made certain by God, on whom they depend for it, and he has determined they ſhall work out their own ſalvation; then it is not neceſſary that they ſhould live a holy life, and work out their ſalvation, and they may be ſaved without all this, and however much they neglect their own ſalvation, and indulge themſelves in all manner of iniquity: or, if it be made certain that they ſhall perſevere in a holy life, that they may be ſaved, then they may as well and certainly be ſaved without perſevering in a holy life, and though they fall away into ſin: and this will encourage Chriſtians not to attempt or deſire to perſevere in obedience, and to live in ſin. They who can argue thus have given up the uſe of reaſon, to embrace the moſt palpable abſurdity.

The objector alſo falls into another inconſiſtency, by ſuppoſing that a Chriſtian may have aſſurance that he is a real Chriſtian, and therefore ſhall be ſaved, when he is ſo inclined to ſin as to prefer living in ſin and the indulgence of his luſts to a holy life; and that he may maintain his aſſurance, while he neglects religion as a taſk, and lives a careleſs, wicked life; which is contrary to truth, to ſcripture, and the reaſon and nature of things. If it were poſſible that a real Chriſtian could be in ſuch a frame, and have ſuch a prevailing diſpoſition, and continue in it, it would be impoſſible that he ſhould have any juſt and well grounded aſſurance of his being a Chriſtian; for he can have no evidence of this, but from a diſpoſition and exerciſes directly contrary to a prefe-

rence of a life of ſin, viz. exerciſes of real holineſs, diſpoſing to work out his own ſalvation with fear and trembling. The hypocrite, who has no true grace, may be ſo deluded as to think and preſume he is a real Chriſtian, and abuſe the doctrine of the certain ſalvation of all who are once Chriſtians, to indulge in ſin, becauſe he has really no love to holineſs, and prefers a life of ſin to the life of a Chriſtian. But it is inconſiſtent to ſuppoſe that a real Chriſtian ſhould have or think he has evidence that he is a Chriſtian, while he is in a careleſs frame, and loves the pleaſure of ſin rather than God and holineſs.

The ſcripture aſſerts that aſſurance of being a Chriſtian, and of ſalvation, is to be attained and maintained in no other way but the exerciſe of holineſs, and great care and diligence in living a holy life. The apoſtle John ſays, "My little children, let us not love in word, neither in tongue, but in deed and in truth. And hereby we know that we are of the truth, and ſhall aſſure our hearts before him:" [1 *John*, iii. 18, 19.] The apoſtle Peter exhorts profeſſing Chriſtians to take care to live and abound in the exerciſe of every Chriſtian grace, in order to have and maintain an aſſurance of their real Chriſtianity; and concludes with theſe words: "Wherefore the rather, brethren, give diligence to make your calling and election ſure: for if ye do theſe things ye ſhall never fall:" [2 *Pet.* i. 5—10.] This is the ſcriptural way of aſſurance; and they who think they have an aſſurance that they are Chriſtians in any other way, and from ſome other propoſed evidence, are preſuming, and deceiving themſelves to their own deſtruction.

And it muſt be further obſerved, that it is not only inconſiſtent with the character of a true Chriſtian at any time to prefer a neglect of religion and a living in allowed ſin, to a holy life, if the former were as ſure a way to ſalvation as the latter; ſo that an aſſurance that he ſhall be ſaved will be no inducement to him to live a careleſs, ſinful life: but it is yet a greater inconſiſtency and contradiction to ſuppoſe a Chriſtian, in that

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ſtrong and lively exerciſe of grace, and love of holineſs, which always attends a true aſſurance that he is a Chriſtian, and ſhall be ſaved, ſhould *then* and for that reaſon prefer a life of ſin to a holy life, and from this aſſurance be led into ſin. This is impoſſible; and directly the reverſe is certain, viz. that ſuch an aſſurance is not only accompanied by a ſtrong deſire and engagedneſs to live a holy life, as without this there can be no real aſſurance, as has been ſhown; but the aſſurance itſelf will greatly add to the ſtrength of deſire and engagedneſs to live a holy life, to the honour of God, and for his own comfort, were it not neceſſary in order to be ſaved.

There are not only theſe inconſiſtencies in the objection, but the objector ſuppoſes that the true Chriſtian is wholly ſelfiſh and mercenary in all he does, and is always diſpoſed to prefer a life in ſin to a holy life, if he may be as ſure of his own ſalvation by living in ſin, as by the contrary. Therefore, having no true love to God and regard for his honour, nor any delight in the law of God, or love of holineſs for its own ſake; if he can obtain a promiſe that he ſhall be ſaved, he will have no motive to ſerve God, or have any concern for his character and glory; but will chooſe to live a life of enmity to God, by ſerving himſelf and his own luſts. It is certain there never was, and never will be, *ſuch* a real Chriſtian, though thouſands have with the objector *ſuppoſed it*, and are hoping for heaven by living in the exerciſe of a ſelfiſh religion, which is abomination in the ſight of God, and will certainly lead them to deſtruction.

The doctrine of the certain perſeverance of all real Chriſtians in a life of holineſs to ſalvation, ſecured to them in the covenant of grace, is a comfortable and pleaſing doctrine to the true Chriſtian. He knows his own inſufficiency, and abſolute and conſtant dependence on God for all holy exerciſes and conduct; and that if God ſhould leave him to himſelf, he ſhould fall into ſin and ruin. And when he finds a promiſe in the covenant of grace, that all true Chriſtians ſhall be kept by the power

power of God, through faith, unto ſalvation, and that where he has begun a good work in men he will carry it on to the day of complete redemption, he lays faſt hold of it, as the only ground of hope that he ſhall perſevere unto ſalvation, and would not be without it for a thouſand worlds. But the ſelf-conſident hypocrite, who never knew his own heart, but thinks he can ſtand in his own ſtrength, and diſtinguiſh himſelf from others who have the ſame aſſiſtance which he has, and by his own exertions embrace the goſpel and live a holy life, in which he himſelf, not God, determines whether he ſhall be ſaved or not, by his own independent obedience, or by the abuſe of the aſſiſtance he has; to ſuch this doctrine is moſt diſpleaſing, and they will oppoſe it with all their might; becauſe it takes away their god in which they truſt, their own ſelves, and makes their ſalvation altogether dependent on God, from firſt to laſt. For the ſame reaſon they oppoſe the doctrines of the divine decrees and of election, as theſe repreſent men as wholly dependent on God, eſpecially for ſalvation, as according to this he determines who ſhall be ſaved, and who ſhall not, independent of man, according to his own pleaſure. This is the only reaſon that can be juſtly aſſigned for their diſpleaſure at theſe doctrines, and their oppoſition to them. And if perſons of this character do not truſt in man, and rely on an arm of fleſh, even themſelves, and that in a matter of the greateſt importance and magnitude, infinitely more ſo than their own exiſtence, or any other of their concerns, it will be difficult, yea, impoſſible, to conceive what is meant by truſting in man. How is it poſſible then that they ſhould eſcape the awful curſe pronounced by God? "Thus ſaith the Lord, curſed be the man that truſteth in man, and maketh fleſh his arm:" [*Jer.* xvii. 5.]

7. It is objected, that theſe doctrines, of man's entire dependence on God in doing any thing towards his own ſalvation, of election, and the certain perſeverance of all true Chriſtians, if they be true, had better not be preached, ſince they will not be underſtood by people in

in general, and are very offenſive to many, by which they are prejudiced againſt religion; and by many who believe them, are abuſed to very bad purpoſes; and, on the whole, do much more hurt than good.

*Anſwer.* This objection is really againſt the Bible itſelf; and particularly againſt the text we are conſidering, in which theſe doctrines are all either expreſſed or implied, as has been ſhown. Therefore the whole Bible, and more eſpecially our text, are to be adduced as containing a complete anſwer.

If theſe doctrines are not to be preached, inculcated or mentioned, why are they contained in the Bible? Why has God publiſhed them to the world? If the preaching of theſe doctrines tends to do hurt, then their being publiſhed in the Bible, which is to be read by all, has an evil tendency. They who make this objection, who are not a few, would drop it immediately, if they have any proper regard for the Bible, as it is levelled againſt divine revelation, and the Author of it.

If theſe doctrines be not underſtood by any preachers or hearers, this muſt be their own fault; for nothing is revealed which may not be underſtood, ſo far as it is revealed, by the honeſt, attentive reader of the Bible, in the aſſiduous uſe of all the helps in his reach. And if they be not underſtood, the fault muſt be in the hearer or the preacher, or perhaps in both.

That theſe doctrines are improved to increaſe the prejudices of many againſt religion, and are abuſed by others to evil purpoſes, is no reaſon why they ſhould not be taught, explained and vindicated; ſince this is an equal reaſon why none of the important truths of the Bible ſhould be taught; for there is no truth in divine revelation which is not liable to abuſe, and has not been abuſed by men, to their own hurt. It is no new thing for men to pervert the writings of inſpiration to their own deſtruction. Shall they therefore be laid aſide, and not ſtudied and inculcated? Let the objector judge.

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Let who will think theſe truths to be of little conſequence, and not ſuitable to be maintained and preached, or doubt or diſbelieve them, or abuſe them to the worſt purpoſes; yet they remain highly important and uſeful. They have been found to be ſo, by thouſands and millions. And the heart of every true Chriſtian is formed upon them, or agreeable to them, whatever his ſpeculations may be. And there is no other way to heaven than that which is marked out in our text. This leads to the next head of improvement.

## Sermon XIV.

Phil. ii. 12, 13. *Work out your own ſalvation with fear and trembling: for it is God who worketh in you, both to will and to do, of his good pleaſure.*

III. THIS ſubject is to be improved in a uſe of EXAMINATION.

This is the moſt important and uſeful part of the ſubject to which we have attended. The text, as it has been conſidered and opened, and vindicated from objections, points out the only way to heaven, and exhibits the true character of every real Chriſtian; and teaches with what views, exerciſes and efforts he muſt work out his own ſalvation. But all this will be in vain to us, if we do not apply it to ourſelves, and in this light examine and try ourſelves, whether we be real Chriſtians, according to this deſcription of a Chriſtian, and walking in the narrow way to heaven.

They who are ſincerely deſirous to know their own ſtate and character, and to determine from the beſt evidence whether they be real Chriſtians or not, may be aſſiſted in this moſt important inquiry, by attending to the following particulars.

1. Have you ever been convinced, and have you a clear, conſtant and growing conviction, of your utter inſufficiency

inſufficiency to will and do any good thing, unleſs God work in you to will and to do; by reaſon of the natural depravity of your hearts, by which you were, in a moral ſenſe, dead in treſpaſſes and ſins? that if you ſhould be left to yourſelves, to follow your own will and choice, without the powerful, regenerating influences of the Spirit of God, you ſhould certainly run on to deſtruction; and are therefore wholly dependent on God for every right motion of will, and all that which is right and good in you; even on his ſovereign, undeſerved grace? The Chriſtian has a clear and powerful conviction of this in his own mind continually, and daily acknowledges it to God, and increaſes in a ſenſe of the depravity of his own heart, and his conſtant dependence on God for divine influences to work in him every right motion of heart; and a view and ſenſe of this truth attends all his exerciſes and conduct. And while he feels his conſtant dependence on God to will and do any thing that is right, he acquieſces in it, and humbly truſts in God, and cries to him for his aſſiſtance and grace.

Herein lies the foundation of the firſt and great difference between a true Chriſtian and thoſe who are not ſo. The latter are ſtrangers to this conviction and feeling, and, whatever their ſpeculations may be, if they do or attempt any thing in religion, they do it in their own ſtrength, and feel as if they had ſome ſufficiency of their own to do good, and were not wholly dependent on God for every right motion of heart, or exerciſe of will.

2. Do you feel a conſtant and cordial conviction that you are wholly blameable for the want of a diſpoſition to will and do that which is neceſſary for your ſalvation, and for all oppoſition of will to this; that your inſufficiency to work out your own ſalvation, and dependence on God to work in you to will and to do it, is no excuſe for your not doing it; but that your want of a will to do it, and all oppoſite inclination, is altogether your own fault. Are you willing to be looked upon in this light, and

and diſpoſed to confeſs this as your ſin, and humble yourſelf in the ſight of God for every thing in your heart and life which is not conformable to the holy law of God? It cannot be reaſonably ſuppoſed that a true Chriſtian, who has been convinced of his own ſinfulneſs by an acquaintance with the law, and is a hearty friend to it, as perfectly right and good; who is a friend to Chriſt, who has obeyed this law, and died on the croſs to magnify it and make it honourable, and to ſave his people from their ſins; that ſuch an one ſhould not condemn himſelf for every thing in his heart and life which in the leaſt deviates from this law, and is not a perfect conformity to it: for not to do this is inconſiſtent with his character as a Chriſtian.

3. When you are moſt attentive to, and feelingly ſenſible of, your own weakneſs and inſufficiency, and of your dependence on God in the ſenſe above deſcribed, is this ſo far from diſcouraging you, and diſpoſing you to ſit ſtill and do nothing, that *then* you have the moſt ardent deſires, and the greateſt courage, zeal and engagedneſs to proſecute and go through the work of a Chriſtian, and work out your own ſalvation? This, which has been the matter of diſcouragement, uneaſineſs and objection to multitudes, has a directly contrary influence with the Chriſtian, and opens the only way in which he can have hope, and by it he is animated with zeal and courage to run the Chriſtian race; and what others cannot feel to be conſiſtent, or be pleaſed with, is to him plain and eaſy, and moſt ſatisfactory and pleaſing, as moſt ſuited to glorify God, and promote the humility, holineſs and happineſs of man. In this view, and in this way only, the goſpel is to the Chriſtian the wiſdom of God and the power of God. Agreeable to this St. Paul ſays, "When I am weak, then am I ſtrong." "I can do all things through Chriſt who ſtrengtheneth me." That is, When I have the greateſt ſenſe of my own weakneſs, and inſufficiency to the work before me, I feel the greateſt ſtrength and courage by truſting in the grace and power of Chriſt; I am then

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ſtrong in the Lord, and in the power of his might, and can with courage undertake and go through the moſt difficult and arduous work.

4. Are you influenced to will and do, and quickened and excited to religious exerciſes, in ſuch a way and manner as naturally leads you to be ſenſible that theſe things take place by the grace and aſſiſtance of God, ſo that you are diſpoſed to aſcribe all to him, and not to yourſelves? Do your own feelings and experience witneſs to your own mind that "It is not of him who willeth, nor of him who runneth, but of God, who ſheweth mercy?" It is doubtleſs God's way ſo to work in Chriſtians by his Spirit as to lead them to be ſenſible that all originates from him, and to acknowledge him to be the worker of all good in them. And they can from their own experience adopt the words of Paul, and ſay, "By the grace of God I am what I am."

5. Are you indeed doing the work of a Chriſtian, working out your own ſalvation, in any meaſure in the manner which has been deſcribed? Do you make religion, and the ſervice of Jeſus Chriſt and his intereſt, your great and really your only buſineſs? And do you make any progreſs, and abound more and more?

The real Chriſtian is painfully ſenſible that he fails and comes unſpeakably ſhort in every thing, which he knows is to be attributed to his own depravity and the ſin which dwelleth in him, ſo that when he would do good, evil (ſin) is preſent with him, and the good which he would he does not. And this ſinful defect, and the evil which attends him in all he does, is a grievous burden, and matter of conſtant humiliation before God. And the more the Chriſtian does, and the more zeal and engagedneſs he has in religion, the more ſenſible he is of his ſinful defects; therefore this increaſing ſenſibility is no evidence that he is not working out his own ſalvation with fear and trembling, but on the contrary is a ſign that he is a real Chriſtian, and is willing and working. They who do the leaſt, or rather nothing at all, in this work of a Chriſtian, are

commonly moſt inſenſible of their defects, and are diſpoſed to think they are doing much, and have few or no painful defects to lament.

But though every Chriſtian comes ſo lamentably ſhort of what he ought, and heartily deſires and wiſhes to do, which is matter of conſtant ſhame and humiliation; yet he is really working out his own ſalvation, in the manner which has been deſcribed in the preceding diſcourſes, and is making this work his only buſineſs. And he muſt be ſuppoſed to gain ſkill and ſtrength to proſecute this work, and grow in grace and in the knowledge of his Lord and Saviour Jeſus Chriſt, the longer he is in the Chriſtian ſchool, and is going in the way to heaven. He therefore who is not in ſome good meaſure diligent in this buſineſs, and fervent in ſpirit, ſerving the Lord, is not ſtedfaſt, unmoveable, always abounding in the work of the Lord, has no reaſon to think he has ever entered upon this work, or knows what it is to live the life of a Chriſtian.

6. Do you live a life of prayer? The Chriſtian, who is working out his own ſalvation with fear and trembling, feeling his own inſufficiency, and conſtant dependence on God to work in him to will and to do, and having a lively ſenſibility of his dangerous ſituation, ſurrounded with numerous ſubtil, potent enemies, who are ſeeking his ruin, and beſet with various and ſtrong temptations to turn aſide, and offend God; and that he ſhall inevitably fall into deſtruction, unleſs God prevent it by his conſtant influences and ſovereign grace; is conſtantly looking to God for ſafety and help, and expreſſing his only hope and truſt in him, praying with all prayer and ſupplication in the Spirit, watching thereunto with all perſeverance. He will earneſtly cry to him for his direction and aſſiſtance, in every exigence and at all times, and call upon the name of the Lord as long as he lives.

A child on the ſide of a tremendous precipice, depending on his father to guide him in every ſtep, and hold him up by his hand, by which alone his fall and being

being dashed to pieces can be prevented, would keep his eye constantly on his father, and cry to him to help him from falling, and conduct him safe through all the dangers with which he feels himself surrounded. Or should a child be in the midst of a wilderness with his father, filled with fierce beasts of prey, ready to devour him, while he is without any strength to defend himself, and knows not one step of the way to a place of safety, and feels that if he should be a minute without the help and guidance of his father, he should run directly into the mouth of some savage beast, or turn aside from the only way to escape death, he would constantly cry to his father for help and protection, who alone could save him. And if his father should be out of his sight but a few minutes, what a cry would he raise after him! and never cease till he got hold of his father's hand.

And shall not the Christian, who feels himself in circumstances of which those of the child now described are but a very faint representation, being infinitely more important and affecting, cry night and day unto his God and only Saviour, for help, succour and deliverance! Surely he will constantly with cheerfulness obey his invitation and command, as not only his duty but his greatest privilege, while he hears him saying, "Look unto me, my spouse, from the lions' dens, from the mountains of the leopards: Call upon me in the day of trouble; I will deliver thee, and thou shalt glorify me: Ask, and ye shall receive; seek, and ye shall find; knock, and it shall be opened unto you: Pray always, and faint not: Pray without ceasing," &c. And the more he loves God, and the stronger is his faith and trust in him, and his confidence in the certain and punctual fulfilment of all his promises, the more hearty, earnest and fervent his prayers will be; for in this way he will express a sense of his dependence on God, and his love to him, and faith and trust in his promises.

The nominal Christian, who has no proper sense of his dependence on God, as it has been explained, but

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feels himself in a great measure sufficient to the work of a Christian, and has no real love to God, or trust in his promises, and dependence upon him, to work all his works in him, both to will and to do, can live without much prayer from day to day; or, if he pray, it will be but a formal, cold business, in which there is no engagedness or heart. But this is not the character of a true Christian, who is working out his own salvation with fear and trembling, knowing that it is God who worketh in him both to will and to do. He casteth all his care upon God, and in every thing by prayer and supplication, with thanksgiving, makes known his requests unto God. Believing that they have a Great High Priest, who is in heaven, Jesus the Son of God, they come boldly, with the utmost freedom of access and of speech, unto the throne of grace, that they may obtain mercy, and find help in time of need.

7. Have you, after you have done all, no reliance on what you do, to recommend you to God as less deserving of his displeasure, or more worthy of pardon of your sins, and of salvation; feeling that if God should be strict to mark your iniquity against you, you cannot answer or stand before him, and must justly perish forever? Under this view and conviction do you constantly fly to Christ, and trust in his atonement, which he has made by his blood, and in his righteousness, for pardon and acceptance with God; feeling yourselves to be infinitely guilty and ill-deserving; that were it not for Christ and his worthiness, and your union to him and interest in his righteousness, you must sink into hell; and that nothing in you, or that you have done or can do, can be acceptable to God, unless you are accepted in the infinitely beloved and worthy Saviour? and in this way, and under this sensible conviction, whatsoever you do, do you do all in the name of Christ, asking all you petition for in his name, and hoping for acceptance and mercy for his sake alone? It has been shewn that this is essential to the character of those who walk humbly with God, and work out their

their own ſalvation with fear and trembling. He who attempts to work out his own ſalvation in any other way, is really working out his own deſtruction.

8. On the whole, let all profeſſing Chriſtians ſeriouſly and with great care examine themſelves, and inquire whether they be really walking in the narrow way to heaven, deſcribed in the text; whether they have ſkill to diſcern and diſtinguiſh it from all others which have been deviſed by men, or that can be imagined; whether they know there are the ſtrongeſt motives and greateſt encouragements to work out their own ſalvation, while they are certain that they are wholly dependent on God for this, and ſhall do nothing unleſs he work in them to will and to do; and that by all they do they do not deſerve the leaſt favour, but remain as ill-deſerving as ever; and find themſelves as zealous and as much engaged to do, while they know they can do nothing of themſelves, as if they were ſelf-ſufficient, and independent on God to work in them to will and do, and could merit their own ſalvation by what they do; whether their depravity of heart, and indiſpoſition to do any good thing unleſs God work in them to will and do, be matter of ſhame and ſelf-condemnation to them, having no excuſe to offer for it, but take the whole blame to themſelves, being diſpoſed to juſtify God, ſhould he leave them to periſh in their ſin, and always ready with pleaſure to give him all the glory of their ſalvation, if he of his ſovereign grace ſhall begin and carry on this work to perfection; whether they are willing to be in his hand, to diſpoſe of them as he in his infinite wiſdom and goodneſs ſhall ſee beſt, and rejoice that all men and all things ſhall be governed and diſpoſed of ſo as to anſwer the wiſeſt and beſt ends, thus always rejoicing in the Lord, that he reigns without any poſſible controul forever.

He who underſtands our text, and ſees the truths expreſſed and implied in it to be perfectly conſiſtent and harmonious, and heartily acquieſces in them, and in the view of theſe truths, and on this plan, is conſtantly working out his own ſalvation with fear and trembling, is doubtleſs

doubtleſs taught of God, and made wiſe unto ſalvation, which he will finally obtain, through the grace of our Lord Jeſus Chriſt.

But he who ſits ſtill or loiters with reſpect to this great work, from whatever motive, or is labouring to go to heaven in his own ſtrength, independent of God, ſo as to be at heart oppoſed to his ſalvation being determined by God, and on this ground is in his heart an enemy to the doctrines of the decrees of God, of election, and the certain perſeverance of all true Chriſtians; is in darkneſs until now, and knows not the only way of ſalvation. The ſcripture warrants us in this concluſion, however uncharitable and cenſorious many may think it to be. We appeal to the Bible, and to the day of judgment.

IV. This ſubject will be improved by urging the exhortation in the text. Let all who hope to be ſaved, make it their only buſineſs to work out their own ſalvation with fear and trembling. There is no other way to heaven but this; and this is a work of life, which cannot be finiſhed till death takes us out of the world. This is the fight of faith, by perſeverance in which the Chriſtian will lay hold of eternal life.

The leaſt deviation from this narrow way, or neglect or loitering in this work, is unreaſonable, and an abuſe of the goſpel, and tends to evil. In order to go in this way, the fleſh with the affections and luſts muſt be crucified; ſelfiſhneſs and pride, with all the evil propenſity which ſprings from them, muſt be watched againſt and croſſed; for all theſe will lead the Chriſtian aſide from the right way, ſo far as they are regarded and gratified. A ſtrong diſpoſition to ſelf-dependence, and dependence on ſome creature, in oppoſition to conſtant dependence on God alone, is implied in theſe luſts. And ſo much of this is in the Chriſtian, that he is conſtantly expoſed to fall by it, and often does ſo, in a degree. When the Chriſtian is in a pious frame, and his religious affections are ſtrong and vigorous, he is expoſed to truſt in his preſent diſpoſition and feelings

for

for what he hopes to will and to do in future; and when he truſts in this as a ſtock and ſufficiency of his own for ſome future work, he always finds himſelf diſappointed, and fails of willing and doing as he expected, becauſe, in proportion to his thus truſting to himſelf, his heart departed from the Lord, and in a degree forgot that he depended every moment on God, to work in him to will and to do. Would the Chriſtian work out his own ſalvation, he muſt watch and pray againſt ſelf-dependence, in this way, or in any other. If he truſts in any degree to miniſters, books, the Bible, or any means, or ſpecial religious advantages, that theſe will help him in any meaſure, independent of the divine, immediate operation, working in him every right motion of heart, he gets ſo far out of the way, and cannot come right till he repent of his folly. Peter truſted to his own preſent feelings, and was ſelf-confident, when he ſaid to Chriſt, "Though all men ſhall be offended becauſe of thee, yet will I never be offended: Though I ſhould die with thee, yet will I not deny thee: I will lay down my life for thy ſake:" [*Matth.* xxvi. 33, 35. *John* xiii. 37.] Truſting to himſelf, he fell from his own ſtedfaſtneſs, and could not be recovered without deep and bitter repentance. Let all be hence warned not to be high-minded, but fear; and let him who thinketh he ſtandeth, take heed leſt he fall. When the Chriſtian is weak, fears and trembles in a ſenſe of his own inſufficiency, and feels his dependence on God conſtantly to work in him to will and do, then is he ſtrong to run the race which is ſet before him, and work out his own ſalvation.

To what has been ſaid, the following particulars may be added as motives to engage in and purſue this work.

1. Conſider *how great* this work is. There is none equal to it, or to be compared with it. It is to overcome ſelf, ſin and Satan, even all the powers of darkneſs; principalities and powers, rulers of the darkneſs of this world, ſpiritual wickedneſs in high places. Nothing ſhort

of

of Omnipotence can ſtrengthen you to perform it, even the mighty power of God, which he wrought in Chriſt, when he raiſed him from the dead, and ſet him at his own right hand, far above all principality, and power, and might, and dominion. At the ſame time that the conſideration of the greatneſs of this work leads to fear and tremble, to feel our own inſufficiency, and to truſt in God alone for a will and ſtrength to do it, it ſerves as a mighty motive to deſire to engage in it and go through, by the power and grace of Chriſt. The motive is great and ſtrong in proportion to the magnitude of the work before us.

2. Conſider the conſequence of neglecting this work, or performing it. The conſequence of the former is, to periſh forever; for none can be ſaved but thoſe who in this way overcome. The conſequence of the latter is, to ſit down with Chriſt on his throne, and reign with him forever.

3. Conſider the abundant encouragement, and innumerable great and precious promiſes, which Chriſtians have to ſtrengthen and animate them in this work, and to truſt in Chriſt to carry them through. They who truſt in the Lord ſhall be as Mount Zion, which cannot be moved; they ſhall renew their ſtrength; ſhall mount up with wings as eagles; they ſhall run and not be weary, and they ſhall walk and not faint.

4. Conſider the pleaſure and happineſs there is in working out your own ſalvation with fear and trembling. It is not a ſlaviſh, ſervile work. There is pleaſure in this fear and trembling, which is nothing more than true humility and truſt in God. No man knows what true happineſs is, who is not cordially engaged in this work. And he who is thus working out his own ſalvation has true pleaſure and happineſs in his work. He has joy and peace in believing, and is going on to complete, everlaſting reſt and joy in the kingdom of Chriſt.

This ſubject will be concluded with an addreſs to ſinners who neglect the great ſalvation.

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The words of the text are not directly and immediately addreſſed to you; yet they contain matter of inſtruction, conviction, admonition and exhortation to you; to which it is of the greateſt importance that you ſhould attend.

You are here taught your ſinful, depraved, undone ſtate; that you are ſo under the dominion of evil propenſities, that you will not be perſuaded and diſpoſed to exerciſe one right volition or thought, unleſs God work it in you by his good Spirit; to do which he is under no obligation, and you are conſtantly provoking him not to do it, but to give you up to eternal deſtruction. Here you have ſet before you your guilt, miſery and danger in a moſt clear and affecting light. At the ſame time you are taught that your neglect of ſalvation, and all that moral depravity, in the exerciſe of which you are ſinning againſt Chriſt, and running into ruin, is your own inexcuſable, aggravated wickedneſs, of which you are continually guilty, and is enough to ſink you down to the deepeſt hell; and will certainly do it, unleſs God ſhall exerciſe ſovereign mercy to you, and you repent and turn, and are willing to work out your own ſalvation with fear and trembling.

And as your oppoſition of heart to this, and even the neglect of this ſalvation, is altogether your own fault, for which you have no excuſe, conſiſting in your own inclination and choice, heaven and all the bleſſings of it are opened and freely offered to your acceptance, and you are invited, exhorted and commanded to work out your own ſalvation with fear and trembling, having a promiſe that in this way you ſhall certainly be ſaved.

All this is ſet before you and urged upon you in the diſcourſes on this ſubject which you have heard. Your attention to theſe truths is therefore demanded by all the authority of heaven. And you are required heartily to receive and comply with them, and thus to lay hold on eternal life, which is now ſet before you and offered to you as really as to any one elſe. Therefore if you periſh, it will be by your own inexcuſable and

greatly aggravated fault. Theſe truths are infinitely important and intereſting to you; for you will be forever happy or miſerable, accordingly as you cordially embrace or reject them.

Say not, "I am not elected, and therefore cannot be ſaved, let me do what I will, as the decrees of God are againſt me." This is horrid preſumption, for you to meddle with and pretend to determine that which is ſecret, and act upon it. Beſides, it is revealed and certain that if you periſh you will periſh as really and as much by your own inexcuſable fault, as if there were no decree of God concerning you. This plea and excuſe will appear to be vain and unreaſonable, when the truth comes to light; and that it proceeded from a heart full of enmity againſt God; and being ſilenced it will ſerve to aggravate the deſtruction of thoſe who make it. Oh! of what infinite importance then is it to you, that you ſhould wholly lay it aſide before it is too late!

Do not entertain the thought that you cannot embrace the goſpel and work out your own ſalvation, and imagine that this is a good excuſe for your not doing it. For this is taking upon you the character of the ſlothful ſervant, who thought to excuſe himſelf for neglecting the right improvement of the talent which was committed to him, by ſaying, "Lord, I knew thee, that thou art an hard man, reaping where thou haſt not ſown, and gathering where thou haſt not ſtrawed." If there ever was or can be a perſon of the character which Jeſus here deſcribes, thou art the man, and your excuſe will be turned againſt you, and you will meet with the doom pronounced on ſuch a ſervant: "Caſt ye the unprofitable ſervant into outer darkneſs: there ſhall be weeping and gnaſhing of teeth."

It is true that you are under an inability to do any thing by which you ſhall be ſaved, which has been explained as conſiſting in the ſinful inclinations of your own heart; and you depend entirely on God for a new heart, and he will give ſuch an heart, or not, according

to

to his good pleaſure; and will determine whether you ſhall be ſaved or not. But it has been fully ſhewn that this kind of inability is ſo far from being an excuſe for not doing, that it is the very thing wherein the ſinner's criminality and blame conſiſt; and to make this an excuſe for not doing implies a great degree of ſtupidity and perverſeneſs, and is replying againſt God, in the ſame manner that the ſlothful ſervant is repreſented to do.

Do not give yourſelves up to ſloth and indifference in religion, and indulge your evil inclinations, in neglect of all concern about the ſalvation of your ſoul, becauſe you think this is already determined by God, and you cannot alter the caſe, therefore you will not trouble yourſelf about it. This is the certain way to determine that you never ſhall be ſaved, and are going in the way to deſtruction; for this is the certain way to periſh forever, if you perſiſt in it, as none can go to heaven in this careleſs way.

Beſides, ſuch a concluſion and practice is moſt unreaſonable, and muſt proceed from amazing blindneſs and ſtupidity. It is a diſpoſition of mind which is condemned as an evidence of the greateſt ſtupidity and ſottiſhneſs by all who exerciſe any reaſon and common ſenſe, in temporal concerns. If a man be accuſed of a capital crime, and is to be tried in a day or two, when it will be determined whether he ſhall be put to death or not, and ſuch a man ſhould appear to be perfectly unconcerned about himſelf and the iſſue of the caſe with reſpect to him, who could be found to juſtify him in this? Would not all join to condemn him as an unreaſonable ſtupid man? Or ſhould a perſon be condemned to death, for ſome crime, and the day of his execution be fixed; could he be perfectly unconcerned and eaſy about his caſe and fate even till the moment of execution came? If this were poſſible, and ſuch an inſtance ſhould be known, all would cry out on him, as ſunk below the reaſon, ſenſibility and feelings of a man, being as thoughtleſs and ſtupid as a beaſt. How much

much more unreaſonable, inſenſible and ſtupid muſt he be, who is upon the verge of eternity, and it muſt ſoon be determined whether he ſhall be unſpeakably happy, or beyond all conception miſerable forever, and yet has no concern about the matter, but is trifling away his time in careleſsneſs about his eternal intereſt, and vain amuſements! This is an inſtance of ſtupidity, ſottiſhneſs, phrenzy or madneſs, which cannot be deſcribed!

Do not therefore give way to ſuch unreaſonableneſs, ſtupidity and infatuation, as to ſpend your time and ſtrength in care and exertions about temporal things, while you neglect the utmoſt, conſtant attention to, and higheſt concern about, thoſe infinitely important and weighty matters, which hang upon every moment of your lives.

Do not entertain ſo good an opinion of yourſelves as to think you are willing to be Chriſtians, and that the reaſon why you are not, is not the want of a willingneſs to embrace the goſpel, and becauſe you *will not* come to Chriſt for ſalvation; but from ſome other cauſe, for which you are not blameable.

Many who are under ſome concern about the ſalvation of their ſouls, fall into this deluſion, and think they are willing to come to Chriſt and be Chriſtians if Chriſt were willing to receive them. Such are ignorant of their own hearts, and have no true idea of that which is implied in being a Chriſtian; and really charge Jeſus Chriſt and the goſpel with falſehood; for in that he declares that whoſoever will may come and be ſaved. In this way they overlook the true reaſon why they are not Chriſtians, and ſhut their eyes to their own true character, guilt and odiouſneſs. It is of the greateſt importance that this deluſion ſhould be removed.

Do not attempt to evade all conviction of the truth, and concern about your ſalvation, by flattering yourſelves that you are in no preſent danger of deſtruction, and you ſhall have time enough hereafter to obtain ſalvation, though you neglect it now. Remember that you have no ſecurity from falling into hell one moment; and

and the voice of God and of reaſon to you is, "Make haſte! Eſcape for thy life, leſt thou be deſtroyed!"

And do not indulge a thought of your own ſufficiency and moral ſtrength to work out your own ſalvation, unleſs God work in you to will and do. Many are ſo ignorant of themſelves, and of the work of a Chriſtian, as to imagine they are ſufficient to begin and go through the work, without feeling their dependence on God. And they think they are truly religious, and working out their own ſalvation, while they are only gratifying their own ſelfiſhneſs and pride, and are in the ſight of God abominable and diſobedient, and unto every good work reprobate.

There are others who are ſo confident of their own independent ſufficiency to help and ſave themſelves, when they ſhall ſet about it in earneſt, that by this confidence in themſelves they are led to indulge in neglect of religion, and carnal ſecurity, for the preſent; and by this deluſion many are faſtened down in ſloth and neglect of their ſouls till it is eternally too late. Could they be perſuaded to try their ſuppoſed ſtrength in earneſt, there would be hope that they would be convinced of their deluſion; as many have been in this way thoroughly convinced and humbled. But ſo long as they cannot be awakened and rouſed to try their boaſted ſtrength, they are like to remain in the fatal deluſion.

It is of infinite importance to you that you do not, on the one hand, preſume upon our own ſtrength and ſufficiency to work out your own ſalvation, and, truſting in yourſelves that you are righteous, depend upon obtaining ſalvation by your own righteouſneſs, or, on this preſumption of your own ſufficiency, live in eaſe and ſecurity, at preſent, in the indulgence of your own corrupt inclinations, depending on yourſelves for ſtrength and help when it ſhall be neceſſary for you to be religious to eſcape deſtruction; or that you do not, on the other hand, live in eaſe and the neglect of ſalvation, from the conſideration of your depravity and inability to ſave yourſelves, and your dependence on God for this,

this, imagining that this takes away all obligation and encouragement to embrace the gospel and work out your own salvation. Both of these delusions equally lead to destruction.

May you realize the infinitely evil and dangerous state in which you are, and be excited to fly from the wrath to come, by laying hold of the hope set before you, knowing that salvation is freely offered to you, and heaven stands open for you, and you are invited to run for this prize, having at the same time the offer and promise of the Holy Spirit, and of all the assistance you want, if you will so far trust in God as to ask him for all this. O sinners, why will ye die!

## Sermon XV.

WRITTEN IN THE YEAR 1800.

Romans iii. 27. *Where is boasting then? It is excluded. By what law? Of works? Nay; but by the law of faith.*

THE Apostle Paul does in this epistle particularly state and explain the way in which sinners may obtain the favour of God, and eternal salvation, which is opened by the gospel. There are but two possible ways of obtaining the favour of God and eternal life, which he mentions, viz. by the works of the law, or obedience to the law of God, and by faith in Jesus Christ. The former way he says is impossible to sinners, and if it were possible, it would be highly improper, and attended with evil consequences. Having proved that all men are sinners and guilty before God, he says, "Therefore by the deeds of the law there shall no flesh be justified in his sight: for by the law is the knowledge of

of ſin. Becauſe the law worketh wrath; and the ſalvation of ſinners is not of works, leſt any man ſhould boaſt." The latter therefore he eſtabliſhes as the only proper, wiſe and poſſible way in which ſinners may be juſtified and ſaved, and ſays, "Therefore we conclude that a man is juſtified by faith, without the deeds of the law: and it is of faith, that it might be by grace, by which boaſting is wholly excluded."

In attending to theſe words of the text, it will be attempted to explain them by ſhowing what is meant by the law of works, and what by the law of faith, and why boaſting is excluded, not by the former, but by the latter; and then improve the ſubject in ſome uſeful remarks and inferences from it.

By the law of works is meant the original law or conſtitution, which requires perfect, perſevering obedience, in order to have and continue to enjoy the favour and bleſſing of God, and which pronounces him accurſed who is guilty of diſobedience in one and the leaſt poſſible inſtance. This law every rational creature is under obligation to obey. The holy angels were made under this law, and, by a ſinleſs, perfect obedience to it, during the whole time of their probation, they have obtained and enjoy the divine approbation, and the reward of eternal life. This is the conſtitution under which Adam and all his poſterity were made; this is the *law of works*. Had the father of the human race continued perfectly to obey this law to the end of his time of trial, he would by theſe his works have obtained eternal life for himſelf and his children too; but, by tranſgreſſing this law of works, he fell under the curſe of it, and laid the foundation of the ruin of all his children, by their falling into the ſame ſtate, as *their* ſinning was, by divine conſtitution, connected with his tranſgreſſion.

And many of the ſinful children of Adam have and do, through their pride and ignorance of themſelves, and of the nature, extent and deſign of the divine law, ſeek and attempt to become righteous, and obtain pardon and ſalvation, by the works of the law—their own obedience.

obedience. Moſt of the Jews did ſo in the days of the Apoſtles. They ſought righteouſneſs as it were by the works of the law, and went about to eſtabliſh their own righteouſneſs; and in this way they failed of obtaining righteouſneſs, and remained as much under the curſe of this law of works as if they had attempted no obedience to it: for all who in this way are of the works of the law, are under the curſe of it; for it is written, Curſed is every one who continueth not in all the things which are written in the book of the law to do them. This way to life is forever ſhut againſt all the ſons of Adam; for they have all tranſgreſſed it, and by this have rendered it forever impoſſible to obtain the righteouſneſs of it by their own works and obedience. It is natural, however, for fallen man, Gentiles as well as Jews, to ſeek a righteouſneſs by their obedience to this law, and to gratify their pride and diſpoſition to truſt and boaſt in themſelves and their own righteouſneſs; and numbers beyond our calculation in the Chriſtian world have taken and are ſtill taking this ſure road to deſtruction, rather than to give up and renounce that *boaſting*, which muſt be effectually deſtroyed in order to embrace the goſpel.

By the law of faith, is meant the goſpel inſtitution and diſpenſation, in which proviſion is made for the pardon, juſtification and ſalvation of ſinners who are under the condemnation and curſe of the law; not by any works of righteouſneſs which they have done or can do, to take off the curſe of the law, or to recommend themſelves to this favour and bleſſing, but purely on the account of the atonement, righteouſneſs and worthineſs of Chriſt, in which they become intereſted ſo as to avail, on their behalf, to deliver from all the evil they deſerve, and procure all the good they want, by *faith* in him, or believing on his name.

It being of great importance that all ſhould have right and clear conceptions of this ſubject, it is proper and uſeful to give a more particular deſcription of theſe two laws, the law of works and the law of faith. This may be

be done to the beſt advantage, perhaps, by conſidering wherein they agree with each other, and in what reſpects there is a difference and oppoſition of one to the other; and how not the former, but the latter, excludes boaſting.

*Firſt.* It is to be conſidered and ſhewn wherein there is an agreement between theſe two laws, and what is as true of one as of the other, and is common to them both.

1. Holineſs or obedience is neceſſarily implied and exerciſed in compliance with each and either of theſe laws, and in order to be intereſted in the promiſes and bleſſings which they contain.

The law of works requires perfect and perſevering holineſs and obedience, in order to enjoy the bleſſings of it. The leaſt ſin cuts a perſon off from all the promiſed good of this law, and ſubjects him to the curſe of it, without any poſſible remedy by that law, as has been before obſerved.

And a compliance with the law of faith, or the covenant of grace, which is the ſame, implies holy exerciſe or true obedience; and this is abſolutely neceſſary in order to be intereſted in the promiſes and bleſſings of this law and covenant.

That faith from which this law or covenant has its denomination, and in the exerciſe of which this law is complied with and fulfilled, and to which all the promiſes it contains are made, implies holineſs of heart, and is itſelf a holy exerciſe. This being an important point, and denied by many, ſo much evidence of it from ſcripture and reaſon will here be produced, as it is hoped will be ſufficient to eſtabliſh the truth of it to the conviction of every unprejudiced mind.

That faith which diſcerns and believes the truth of the goſpel from a view of the moral excellence and wiſdom of it, and ſees the character of Chriſt to be divinely excellent and beautiful, is not a mere ſpeculative faith, confined to the underſtanding, excluſive of taſte and exerciſe of heart, and cordial approbation. Moral

excellence and beauty is not, and cannot be, the object of mere intellect, as distinguished from taste and discerning of heart; therefore a real sight of moral excellence and beauty, or loveliness, necessarily implies love of that excellence and beauty, and these cannot be distinguished or separated one from the other; for they are really one and the same thing. Hence it is demonstrably certain, that the faith which discerns the gospel to be true and excellent, or that internal evidence which renders it most worthy of belief, implies a discerning, taste and relish of divine excellence and beauty, which is a virtuous disposition and exercise of heart; and is real holiness of heart, if there be in nature any such thing.

But that saving faith implies and essentially consists in a holy exercise of heart, in embracing the gospel as excellent and holy, and worthy of all acceptation, a cordial approbation of Christ and his character, and trusting in him, is abundantly evident from the scripture, as well as from the reason and nature of the case.

The following passages, among many others which might be mentioned, afford an undeniable proof of this.

Believing on Christ and receiving him is mentioned as one and the same. "But as many as received him, to them gave he power to become the sons of God, even to them that believe on his name." Coming to Christ and believing on him is mentioned as the same thing. "Jesus stood and cried, saying, If any man thirst, let him come unto me and drink. He that *believeth* on me, as the scripture hath said, out of his belly shall flow living waters." Receiving Christ and coming to him are holy exercises of heart; for the character of Christ is so perfectly holy, that it is impossible that an unholy heart should be pleased with it; and none can cordially come to him and receive him but in the exercise of holy love to him. Christ said to the Jews, "This is the work of God, that ye believe on him whom he hath sent;" and proceeds to speak of coming to him, and eating his flesh and drinking his blood, as being the same with believing on him: [*John* vi. 29—58.] He said

ſaid to the Jews, "I know you, that ye have not the love of God in you;" and then proceeds to tell them that this was the only reaſon why they believed not on him, and did not receive him: "How can ye believe who receive honour one of another, and ſeek not the honour that cometh from God only?" In theſe words it is aſſerted that none can believe on him unleſs his heart be friendly to God and to him; and that it is impoſſible that any one ſhould believe on Chriſt who is an impenitent enemy of God; which could not be true, if faith did not imply holy exerciſes of heart: [*John* v. 40, 44.] That faith in Chriſt implies holineſs of heart, and is a holy exerciſe, is aſſerted by Chriſt in his diſcourſe with Nicodemus; [*John* iii. 18—21:] "He that believeth on the Son is not condemned; but he that believeth not is condemned already. And this is the condemnation, that light is come into the world, and men have loved darkneſs rather than light, becauſe their deeds were evil; for every one that doth evil hateth the light, neither cometh to the light, leſt his deeds ſhould be reproved. But he that doth truth cometh to the light." If every one that doth evil, hateth the light, and will not come to it, and loves darkneſs rather than light, is condemned, and he that believeth on Chriſt is not condemned; then believing is coming to the light, and loving it, or receiving the truth in the love of it, and doing the truth, or conforming to and practiſing it, in which holineſs conſiſts. Surely nothing can be plainer and more ſtrongly aſſerted than this is in theſe words.

Believing on Chriſt is commanded as a duty, and therefore muſt be an exerciſe of the heart, and an holy exerciſe; for nothing can be the ſubject of command but the heart or will, and nothing was ever commanded by God but holineſs, and nothing elſe can be duty. Chriſt preached, ſaying, "Repent and *believe the goſpel.*" He ſaid to his diſciples, "Ye believe in God, *believe alſo in me.*" He ſaid to the Jews, "This is the work of God, that ye believe on him whom he hath ſent. The apoſtle John

John says, "This is his commandment, that we should believe on the name of his Son Jesus Christ." Therefore believing on Christ is called "*the obedience of faith*," and obeying Christ is the same with believing on him. "And being made perfect he became the author of eternal salvation to all them that *obey* him." The apostle Paul observes, that the just *lives* by his faith; and says, "I *live* by the faith of the Son of God." If faith was that by which he lived, it was his spiritual, Christian life, which certainly is Christian holiness. He therefore says, "Faith worketh by love." Love is the sum of true holiness, but this is the efficacious, operative nature and life of faith, so that the faith is wholly dead and inactive, the life and active nature of which is not love.

The apostle Paul says, "Abraham was strong in faith, giving glory to God." If faith be not friendly to God, to the divine character, it does not, it cannot, give any glory to God, however strong it may be; but friendship to God is true love to God, and is a holy exercise of heart. Accordingly the apostle James, speaking of Abraham believing God, says, "By this he obtained the character of the friend of God." If there were no love or holiness in saving faith, then an impenitent enemy of God might have as much of it, and be as strong in faith, as Abraham or any other man, and that too without any true discerning or sight of the true character of Christ, and spiritual things. "For every one that doth evil hateth the light, neither cometh to the light;" which is true of every impenitent, unregenerate person. "The natural man receiveth not the things of the Spirit of God, for they are foolishness unto him, neither can he know them, because they are spiritually discerned." Therefore, whosoever believeth that Jesus is the Christ, or has saving faith, is born of God; has a new and holy heart given him of God; for with such a heart the spiritual man discerneth spiritual things, and believeth unto righteousness.

Much more evidence might be produced from scripture to prove that saving faith is real gospel holiness; but

but as what has already been said on this point does make it sufficiently clear, it is needless to add any more proof that, according to the law of faith, holiness is as necessary in order to an interest in the promises and blessings of it, as it is according to the law of works; which is the proposition proposed to be proved.

2. The holiness which is necessary in a compliance with the law of works and the law of faith, consists in conformity to the same law or rule of duty. It is therefore the same kind of holiness, as there is but one law and rule of holiness. All holiness consists in love to God and our neighbours, which, though expressed in different words, and exercised in a different manner and circumstances, and to answer different purposes, yet it is essentially one and the same thing, and is conformity and obedience to the same law.

*Secondly.* It is to be considered wherein these two laws differ, and are opposed to each other.

This may be stated and explained in the following particulars.

1. According to the law of works, the perfectly holy and obedient offer to God their holiness and works of obedience as the price of the favour and acceptance of God, and the reason of their having his approbation and rewards, and God accepts and rewards them out of respect to their obedience and good works, as a testimony of his love of holiness, and pleasure in their obedience to him. Thus the holy angels were justified by their works. Their perfect holiness and obedience was the price of the favour they obtained of God. They trusted in their own righteousness to recommend them to God's acceptance, and the benefits of justification and eternal life; and, in bestowing these upon them, God testified his approbation of their character and works.

The law of faith is directly the reverse of this. It opens a way for the pardon, justification and eternal life of SINNERS, who have fallen under the curse of the law, and are forever cut off from a possibility of being justified by the law of works. According to the law of faith, sinners

ners are pardoned and juſtified by the atonement, righteouſneſs and merit of Jeſus Chriſt, and the holineſs which they exerciſe is ſo far from recommending them to the leaſt favour on account of their moral worth and excellence, that it wholly conſiſts in what is implied in *receiving* theſe bleſſings and all they want as a free gift to the infinitely guilty and ill-deſerving, without money or price, from the hands of an infinitely gracious and bountiful benefactor.

By faith the ſinner comes to Chriſt for all he wants, ſenſible that by ſin he has undone himſelf, and may juſtly be caſt off by God into eternal deſtruction; he confeſſes his ſins and ill deſert, and heartily approves of the law of God, which condemns and curſes him, as juſt, good and excellent, worthy to be maintained and honoured. He highly approves of the character of Chriſt, in ſeeking and promoting the honour of God, by vindicating and honouring the law which ſinners had tranſgreſſed and trampled under foot, by ſuffering the curſe of it himſelf, in dying on the croſs, and obeying it perfectly. He is pleaſed with the way of ſalvation by Chriſt, in which the ſinner is humbled and ſaved by free grace, and not by works of righteouſneſs which he has done or can do; and he is greatly pleaſed with the deliverance from all ſin, and that perfect holineſs which Chriſt will beſtow on all who believe in him; and he is ſatisfied with that heaven and happineſs, that glorious immortality, which Chriſt has brought to light, and will cauſe all believers fully and eternally to poſſeſs, as his purchaſe and free gift to them, though in themſelves infinitely unworthy and ill-deſerving. Thus the believer comes to Chriſt as the apoſtle Paul did, deſiring not to be found in his own righteouſneſs, which is of the law, but that which is through the faith of Chriſt, the righteouſneſs which is of God by faith.

This is the great, capital and moſt ſtriking difference and oppoſition between the law of works and the law of faith, which, it is preſumed, will be clearly underſtood by every judicious, attentive perſon, and appear to be of great importance to be made and always kept in mind.

It

It may be uſeful, however, to ſome, farther to explain and illuſtrate this intereſting and important point by the parable of the elder ſon and the prodigal. The latter having rendered himſelf guilty, odious and wretched, by leaving his father's houſe, and fooliſh conduct, when his eyes were opened, and he ſaw how guilty, wretched and undone he was, and that all he wanted for his relief was to be had in his father's houſe, he determined to go and caſt himſelf upon the goodneſs and mercy of his father, confeſſing his folly and ſin in abuſing his father and leaving his houſe, and his utter unworthineſs of the leaſt favour. In this, and in receiving all he wanted from the free, undeſerved kindneſs of his parent, was exerciſed and expreſſed as real love to him and his family, as his elder brother had done, if he were as good and obedient as he repreſented himſelf to be. The latter recommended himſelf to his father's approbation and favour by his conſtant obedience and good deeds: the prodigal was covered with ſhameful guilt, unworthineſs and ill deſert, and humbly and gladly receives all that is beſtowed upon him as a free gift to an unworthy creature, who might juſtly have been left to periſh without the leaſt relief, having nothing to recommend him to favour, but every thing to the contrary. The one brings and offers his works of obedience as the reaſon why he ſhould be favoured and rewarded, or as the price by which he had purchaſed the bleſſings he deſired and expected; the other has nothing but ſhame, guilt and wretchedneſs, and ſeeks and accepts of his father's kindneſs in receiving him to his favour, and all the privileges, enjoyments and honours of his family, as a free gift to a moſt ill-deſerving ſon, who could make no compenſation for the injury he had done. But in his friendly thought he had of his father, in his returning hence to him, confeſſing his ſin and unworthineſs of any favour, and cordial acceptance of offered mercy, and gladly coming into his father's houſe and family, he exerciſed as real love and friendſhip to his parent and his family, and to the laws, buſineſs and enjoyments of his houſe,

as

as did the elder ſon: and yet their love and friendſhip was exerciſed and expreſſed in very different and oppoſite ways, according to their different and oppoſite ſtate and circumſtances.

But the difference and oppoſition between theſe two laws of works and faith in other reſpects, which are implied in or do ariſe from that already mentioned, though not ſo great and important, yet muſt be noticed, as neceſſary in order fully to underſtand the ſubject to which we are attending.

2. None can be juſtified and obtain eternal life by the law of works, unleſs he is perfectly obedient and holy, without the leaſt ſin or defect.

But by the law of faith the leaſt degree of holineſs exerciſed by a ſinner, in believing in Chriſt, and coming to him, and truſting in him for pardon and ſalvation, obtains juſtification and the promiſe of eternal life, while he is yet attended with a great degree of unholineſs and ſin. The reaſon of this difference is, becauſe by the law of works a creature is juſtified by his own works or holineſs, which therefore muſt be perfect; for by the leaſt ſin he falls under the curſe of the law, and can never after obtain any bleſſing by it: "For as many as are of the works of the law are under the curſe; for it is written, Curſed is every one that continueth not in all the things which are written in the book of the law to do them." But by the law of faith the ſinner is not juſtified by his own works or holineſs, but wholly by the merit and righteouſneſs of Chriſt. The leaſt exerciſe of holineſs by which a ſinner accepts of Chriſt offering himſelf to him, and comes to him for pardon, righteouſneſs and complete redemption, intereſts him in all the bleſſings Chriſt has obtained for ſinners, and in all the promiſes of the covenant of grace. "He that believeth on the Son hath everlaſting life. Verily, verily I ſay unto you, he that heareth my word, and believeth on him who ſent me, hath everlaſting life, and ſhall not come into condemnation, but is paſſed from death to life."

This

This leads to obſerve another difference between theſe two laws.

3. By the law of works a creature cannot be juſtified until he has perſevered in perfect obedience to the end of the time of his probation: but by the law of faith the ſinner is juſtified, and intereſted in all the promiſes of the goſpel, and made an heir of eternal life, upon the *firſt act* of faith in Chriſt. "He that believeth on the Son hath everlaſting life; he ſhall not come into condemnation, but is paſſed from death to life." Saving faith is indeed a perſevering faith, ſo that he who once believes will continue to believe to the end of life. His faith ſhall never fail; not becauſe it is in its own nature a perſevering faith, or from the power and ſufficiency of the believer, but becauſe God has promiſed, in the covenant of grace, that he who once believes, to whom he has given faith to lay hold of and embrace this covenant by believing on Chriſt, ſhall be kept by the power of God through faith unto ſalvation. The firſt act of faith being in this ſenſe and manner a perſevering faith, the promiſe is made to believing, even the very firſt act of it, and it is proper that this ſhould bring into a ſtate of juſtification, and give a title to eternal life, as the firſt act of faith is the beginning of an everlaſting union to Chriſt, in whom the believer has everlaſting righteouſneſs and ſtrength.

4. Though the holineſs of the law of works and the law of faith be the ſame in nature and kind, conſiſting in obedience to the ſame, and conformable to the revealed will of God; yet, owing to the ſtate and circumſtances of the ſinner, and the different way and manner of obtaining juſtification by the exerciſe of holineſs, which has been deſcribed, there is a real and great, though circumſtantial, difference in the exerciſe of the ſame holineſs. The ſinner, infinitely guilty, ill-deſerving and wretched, exerciſes his love to God and his law, and to Chriſt the mediator, in coming to and truſting in Chriſt, and receiving from him deliverance from the infinite evil he deſerves, and from all ſin, and accepting of all

the good he wants and is capable of enjoying to all eternity, as a free, undeſerved gift. He has a greater ſenſe of the infinite goodneſs and free grace of God, and feels more dependent on this, and more indebted to God, and under greater obligations to him, than the holy angels who have never ſinned can; and conſequently the redeemed exerciſe a greater degree of humility, and a more ardent and ſweet love of gratitude, and render a higher tribute of praiſe to God, their Redeemer and Saviour, than they are capable of who have never ſinned. Therefore the redeemed from among men are repreſented as ſinging a new ſong before the throne of God, which none but they could learn.

*Thirdly.* It is to be conſidered how and why all boaſting is excluded by the law of faith, as it has been explained.

It is not implied in this, that the law of works, when rightly underſtood and perfectly obeyed, affords any ground of boaſting in a bad ſenſe, or of ſinful boaſting, which is meant here. The holy angels, who are juſtified, and have obtained the reward of eternal life by the law of works, have no ground for boaſting. They have no pride, and do not glory in themſelves, in their own obedience and works, but in the Lord, in his munificence and glorious character. But this law of works is not ſuited to the ſinner, to obtain juſtification and life by it; for he has fallen under the curſe of it, and is forever excluded from the righteouſneſs of it in his own perſon; and to ſuppoſe a ſinner can be juſtified by any obedience or works he can perform, is to ſet him infinitely higher than the place and ſtate he is in, and to diſhonour and degrade the law; and for a ſinner to attempt this, is a moſt daring inſtance of pride and ſelf-confident boaſting. And were it poſſible that a ſinner could obtain the favour of God, and juſtification, by any obedience or holineſs of his own, and out of reſpect to the worth and amiableneſs of that, this would pleaſe and flatter his pride, and nothing could prevent his haughty boaſting of himſelf and his own good works.

And

And this ſuits the heart of proud man; he naturally ſeeks to be juſtified by his own works, if he ſeeks it at all, that he may have ſomething to boaſt of, by recommending himſelf to the favour of God by his own good deeds, being ignorant of himſelf, of his own character, and of God and his law.

Thus the Jews rejected the law of faith, and followed after righteouſneſs, and obtained it not, becauſe they ſought it not by faith, but as it were by the works of the law. They, being ignorant of God's righteouſneſs, went about, or attempted, to eſtabliſh their own righteouſneſs. And many thouſands and millions of Gentiles in the Chriſtian world have ſtumbled at that ſtumbling ſtone, the law of faith, which excludes boaſting, and have ſought and are now ſeeking to be ſaved by the law of works; how many millions none can tell! And perhaps there is not, nor ever has been, one of the ſons or daughters of Adam who has enjoyed the light of divine revelation, and has in any meaſure or way ſought to be ſaved, who has not in a greater or leſs degree made this wicked and dangerous attempt. Happy are they who have been cured of boaſting by embracing the law of faith.

What has been ſaid in deſcribing the law of faith is ſufficient to ſhow that it excludes all boaſting. The ſinner in this way is received to favour, is juſtified and ſaved, not on account of any works he has done, or ever will do, and is not recommended to favour by any worthineſs or holineſs he has, but is conſidered as in himſelf, as poor and naked, wretched and miſerable, infinitely guilty, and deſerving to be caſt into hell forever, and all the favour he receives is a free, undeſerved gift and bounty, yea, bounty to the moſt ill-deſerving. Where is boaſting then? What has he to boaſt of but guilt, ill-deſert, poverty and wretchedneſs?

And all this is not only true, and he is viewed in this light by God, agreeable to his holy law; but the ſinner is made to feel and acknowledge this, and cannot believe on Chriſt and come to him by faith, unleſs he has a clear

conviction of his own vile, odious character, and feels that he has no worthineſs to recommend him to the leaſt favour, but is infinitely far from it; that he is ſo unworthy and infinitely guilty and ill-deſerving, that he may be juſtly hated by God, and caſt into endleſs deſtruction. Thus the ſinner, in complying with the law of faith, even in the firſt and every act of faith in Chriſt, humbles himſelf in the ſight of God, while he is made in a ſenſe to annihilate himſelf before God, yea, to feel that he is infinitely worſe than nothing. And all his holineſs, and every right exerciſe of mind, conſiſts in a hearty acknowledgement of this, and thus humbling himſelf, and approving of the character of Chriſt, and the way of juſtification and ſalvation by him, which is the law of faith, and in views and exerciſes which are implied in this. Thus all pride and diſpoſition to boaſt is counteracted and deſtroyed, the ſinner abaſes himſelf, and rejoices to exalt free, ſovereign grace, when and ſo far as he believes in Chriſt, and is pleaſed with the law of faith: and the more holy and obedient he is, in conforming to this law, the more humble he is, and farther from all diſpoſition to boaſt. Thus all boaſting is entirely and forever excluded by the law of faith.

## Sermon XVI.

Romans iii. 27. *Where is boaſting then? It is excluded. By what law? Of works? Nay; but by the law of faith.*

IMPROVEMENT.

I. WE learn from what has been obſerved on this ſubject, that they make a great miſtake, and have eſpouſed a dangerous and hurtful error, who believe and aſſert that if faith or believing in Chriſt, in order to juſtification, is a virtuous or holy act, or implies

plies any real goodneſs, then the ſinner has ſomething to recommend himſelf, which is of real worth, of which he has reaſon to boaſt, and muſt be acceptable to God; and therefore has no need of the merits of Chriſt and free grace in order to be juſtified. They therefore contend that to aſſert that a ſinner muſt exerciſe any holineſs previous to his juſtification, and in order to it, and that faith is a holy act, is entirely to ſubvert the goſpel, and lays a foundation for boaſting, and flatters the pride of man. Of theſe there have been, and now are, not a few in all parts of the proteſtant world.

What has been ſaid on this ſubject ſerves to ſhow how unreaſonable and contrary to the truth this notion is, and the evil tendency of it. But it may be uſeful and of importance to review ſome things which have been mentioned in the preceding diſcourſe, by which the error and abſurdity of this opinion will be abundantly expoſed and confuted.

1. The ſinner is under the curſe of the holy, righteous and good law of God, which pronounces him to be a hateful, accurſed creature, deſerving to lie under the divine diſpleaſure and wrath forever. Every tranſgreſſor of this law is under this curſe and in this ſtate, whatever holy obedience he had performed, and how long ſoever he had continued perfectly holy before his ſin. His tranſgreſſion, even one inſtance of it, totally obliterates and annihilates his preceding holineſs, ſo that it cannot have the leaſt influence to prevent the curſe coming upon him, or alleviate it in any degree; but he is as odious and guilty, and as much the object of God's diſpleaſure for his tranſgreſſion, as if his previous holineſs never had exiſtence, which cannot be reckoned in his favour in any reſpect or degree, without counteracting the law of God, and ſetting it aſide in favour of the ſinner, who by it is curſed. And it is the ſame with regard to any future holineſs and obedience. If the ſinner repent and turn to obedience, though ever ſo perfect and long continued, this would not in the leaſt degree atone for the ſin of which he had been guilty, or remove

remove the curſe which the law has fixed upon him for his ſin; and therefore could not be more acceptable to God than if he had not obeyed, or than his obedience before he ſinned, and cannot be the reaſon and ground of his receiving any favour from God, as after obedience is as much obliterated and rendered of no avail to recommend to any favour, by his ſin, as his obedience before he ſinned, it being equally contrary to the law, which pronounces him accurſed, to regard and accept or ſhow any favour for his after obedience, as for the former, and it cannot be done without vacating and ſetting it aſide, as not worthy of regard.

This is the plain law of God, which curſes every one who continueth not to obey it in all things which it requires, and holds him under this curſe, notwithſtanding all the obedience he had paid to it before he ſinned, or any obedience after that. The law affords no remedy or help, or grants any thing better than what is contained in the curſe. This is the law of God. It is his voice to all his creatures who are moral agents. It is the language of his heart, which he will never counteract or contradict, in words or conduct. He views the ſinner in the light in which his law ſets him, and will treat him accordingly ſo long as he remains under the curſe of it, and is not delivered from it in a way which is perfectly conſiſtent with it, and in which as much regard is paid to it, as if the ſinner remained under the curſe of it forever.

Therefore, whatever repentance and approbation of the law which curſes him, and love to God, the ſinner exerciſes before he is delivered from the curſe by actually coming to Chriſt and believing on him, does not in any degree remove his guilt, or render him leſs deſerving of the curſe, and cannot recommend him to the leaſt favour; but he is in the ſight of God as much accurſed and the object of his diſpleaſure, and in this ſenſe as truly *ungodly*, as he was before, and as if he had no ſuch exerciſes of love and repentance, as they cannot be reckoned in his favour, ſo as in the leaſt to remove the curſe.

curſe. And whatever repentance, and love to God and his law, or holineſs, is neceſſary in order to come to Chriſt, and is exerciſed in coming to him and believing on him, this cannot, in itſelf conſidered, recommend the ſinner to favour, or render him leſs unworthy or leſs accurſed; but as by this the ſinner lays hold of Chriſt, and is united to him, he comes within the reach of his merit and worthineſs, ſo as by him who has been made a curſe he may conſiſtent with the law be delivered from the curſe of it, and obtain all the favour which he wants. And being thus by Chriſt delivered from the curſe of the law, and pardoned and juſtified by virtue of his atonement and righteouſneſs, his perſon and his holy exerciſes of faith and love become acceptable to God through Jeſus Chriſt, to whom he is united. God may now be juſt, and maintain and honour his righteous law, and the juſtifier of him who believeth in Jeſus, he being made accepted in his beloved Son, in whom he is well pleaſed.* The

* This ſerves to fix the true and plain meaning of the Apoſtle's words, [*Rom.* iv. 4, 5.] "Now to him that worketh is the reward not reckoned of grace, but of debt: but to him that worketh not, but believeth on him that juſtifieth the ungodly, his faith is counted to him for righteouſneſs." By *him that worketh* is meant, him who by his works of obedience recommends himſelf to favour, and the reward of eternal life, and in this ſenſe earns the reward by the price of his obedience, which no creature can do, except thoſe who are perfectly innocent and holy, as has been obſerved in explaining the law of works. He who worketh not is the ſinner, who neither has nor can have any works to recommend to the leaſt favour; who is convinced of this, and makes no attempt to do any thing in this view and to this end; who feels that he is juſtly accurſed, and under the diſpleaſure of God, and deſerves nothing better than everlaſting deſtruction, being an ungodly rebel againſt God, and wholly unrighteous. As ſuch he looks to Chriſt, and believeth on him, and cordially receives him and truſts in him for righteouſneſs, who pardons and juſtifieth ſuch unrighteous, ungodly, infinitely guilty, hell-deſerving ſinners as he feels and confeſſes himſelf to be.

They who hold the tenet to which the inference under conſideration is oppoſed, lay much ſtreſs upon the word *ungodly* in this paſſage, as if it denoted a ſinner altogether deſtitute of the leaſt friendly diſpoſition towards God and Chriſt, being an impenitent enemy to God. But though ſuch are often meant in the ſcripture by the ungodly,

The reaſon of all this—why the ſinner's holineſs before or after he has once ſinned cannot be acceptable and reckoned in his favour, or in any degree remove the curſe of the law, and whatever holineſs he may exerciſe previous to his union to Chriſt, and is neceſſary in order to his coming to Chriſt, and actually forming this vital union to him, cannot render him acceptable to God, or leſs unworthy and accurſed, and why he is totally unacceptable, as ungodly and curſed by God, till he is actually united to Chriſt, and can be accepted only in the worthineſs of this beloved Son of God—the reaſon of this is plain and eaſy to be ſeen.

The tranſgreſſion of the law of God in the leaſt ſingle inſtance is rebellion againſt a Being infinitely great, powerful, wiſe, juſt and good, who has abſolute and unlimited right and authority to command and give law to his creatures; they are therefore under infinite obligation to perfect obedience; and conſequently a violation of this obligation can be no leſs than an infinite crime, or an infinite moral evil. Beſides, he who rebels againſt God, has a diſpoſition and will to dethrone him, and put an end to his law, authority and moral government, and introduce infinite confuſion and miſery through the whole univerſe; and his conduct tends to this,

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godly, yet it does not follow that preciſely this idea is always to be denoted by this word. It has been ſhewn in what ſenſe every unpardoned, unjuſtified ſinner is properly denominated ungodly, and this appears to be the ſenſe in which the Apoſtle uſes it, from the connection and context. And underſtanding it as they do, makes the Apoſtle to ſay that a ſinner, with a hard, impenitent heart, full of enmity to God and to Chriſt, and the way of ſalvation by him, and juſtification by free grace, may and does believe on Chriſt, receive and truſt in him for juſtification and ſalvation, which he at the ſame time abhors with his whole heart! This is to make him aſſert, with themſelves, that which is moſt abſurd and abſolutely impoſſible. It is therefore moſt certain the Apoſtle did not uſe this word here in the ſenſe which they put upon it, but in a ſenſe perfectly agreeable to the ſubject of which he treats, and the point he is proving, which is naturally and eaſily underſtood by the unprejudiced and diſcerning; being conſiſtent with himſelf, with other ſcripture, and with the cleareſt reaſon.

this, and would actually effect it were it poſſible, and were it not counteracted and prevented. Every ſin therefore muſt be an infinite evil, in the nature and tendency of it. There is no moral truth more demonſtrably clear and certain than this; and this is a truth on which many other moral truths depend, which relate to the law of God and his moral government, as we ſhall ſee.*

Sin being thus an infinite moral evil, no temporary ſufferings of the ſinner, or of any mere creature, can make the leaſt degree of atonement for it, ſo as in any meaſure to alleviate or deliver him from the curſe of the law. And it is equally certain that no holineſs of a mere creature can avail to recommend him who has once ſinned to the leaſt favour. Though the ſinner had been perfectly obedient and holy a thouſand years before he ſinned, this is but a finite moral good, and therefore the infinite moral evil of which he has been guilty infinitely overbalances his finite holineſs, ſo that it weighs nothing in the oppoſite ſcale, and does no more to lighten or take off the curſe, than if it never had exiſtence. And this is equally true of any obedience which the ſinner ſhould perform after he had once ſinned, as has already been obſerved: it has no tendency to take off the curſe, and cannot recommend him to any favour, or be the leaſt ground or reaſon of his being conſidered and treated any better or otherwiſe than as one who is juſtly curſed, unworthy of any favour, and deſerving all the evils of the curſe. And therefore it would be unreaſonable, and acting contrary to the law, to conſider and treat him otherwiſe, or ſhew him any favour out of reſpect to his obedience.

* The penalty threatened in the law of God to every tranſgreſſion, which is endleſs puniſhment, has its foundation on the infinite evil of ſin, and is a demonſtration that it is an evil of ſuch magnitude: for, if ſin were not infinitely criminal, it would not deſerve an infinite puniſhment, nor would it be threatened. Chriſt explains the meaning of the curſe or penalty of the law, when he ſays, "Depart *ye curſed* into everlaſting fire." They who deny the infinite evil of ſin, cannot vindicate or underſtand the divine law, or the goſpel, which is founded upon it.

Thus it appears certain, that it is impoſſible that the holineſs of a creature who has once ſinned, ſhould be accepted as a reaſon of his having any favour, and being in any reſpect delivered from the curſe of the law, as the evil of his ſin infinitely outweighs all the moral good of which he is capable, and ſinks it into nothing, ſo as to render it wholly unacceptable, conſiſtent with the divine law, were it true that ſuch obedience or moral good might take off the curſe of the law, and render the ſinner acceptable, did it overbalance, or were it equal to, the evil of his ſin. But even this is not true. The curſe of the law denounces infinite natural evil as the puniſhment which ſin deſerves, and therefore cannot be taken off or removed by any thing but *ſuffering*. No degree of obedience or moral good, be it ever ſo much or ſo great, can make any atonement for one the leaſt ſin, ſo as to deliver the ſinner from the curſe. Therefore Chriſt himſelf was made a curſe, that by ſuffering the evil of the curſe, the juſt *ſuffering* for the unjuſt, he might deliver the ſinner who believes in him from the curſe, and open the way for him to come to God with acceptance.

From all this it appears that the opinion under conſideration, that, if the ſinner is recovered to any degree of holineſs antecedent to his juſtification by the merit and righteouſneſs of Chriſt, and in order to it, he has whereof to glory, and has a righteouſneſs of his own which is acceptable to God, ſo that he ſtands in no need of the righteouſneſs of Chriſt in order to be juſtified; that this opinion is a great and dangerous error, moſt contrary to the reaſon and nature of things, and the holy law of God, and really perverts and makes void both law and goſpel. Therefore they who hold and perſiſt in this error are in truth and in a high degree *Antinomians*, as their doctrine makes the law wholly void in the moſt important and eſſential branch of it. And their doctrine on this point is totally *Antichriſtian*. For the law is in ſuch a ſenſe the foundation of the goſpel, that if the former be perverted and made void, the latter becomes

becomes unintelligible and uſeleſs. If ſinners may be delivered from the curſe of the law, and obtain favour and juſtification, by becoming in any degree holy and obedient, then they may be ſaved without Chriſt and the goſpel. "If there had been a law which could have given life, verily righteouſneſs ſhould have been by the law; and if righteouſneſs come by the law, then Chriſt is dead in vain:" [*Gal.* ii. 21, iii. 21.]

We hope that men, ſome of them at leaſt, who hold and propagate theſe antinomian and antichriſtian doctrines in theory, have better hearts than heads, and love and embrace the truth in the former, while they believe that which is groſs and dangerous error with the latter.

2. Were the preceding obſervations not true, which is indeed an impoſſible ſuppoſition, and could the ſinner, on becoming perfectly holy and obedient, be delivered from the curſe of the law, and admitted to the acceptance and favour of God, and his paſt ſin not be remembered againſt him, out of reſpect to his preſent holineſs, conſiſtent with the law of God, yet this does not touch the caſe of a ſinner, who only exerciſes ſo much of a right diſpoſition as is neceſſarily implied in approving of the character and law of God, and of Chriſt, and in coming to him for pardon, juſtification and life. He may exerciſe ſuch a degree of holineſs conſiſtent with his having much more ſin than holineſs at the ſame time, which is undoubtedly true of every ſinner who embraces the goſpel, and of every Chriſtian as long as he lives in this world. A ſinner who becomes friendly to God, and embraces the goſpel, has ſuch low and ſinfully deficient exerciſes of love, and ſo much of that which is contrary, and poſitive wickedneſs, that, aſide from his guilt for former ſins, his preſent character, conſidered in itſelf, has much more evil than good, and, on the whole, is worſe than nothing, and cannot be an object of the complacency and favour of God, but rather of his diſpleaſure and curſe, and he ſtands in as much need of favour and juſtification by free grace through the

the righteouſneſs of Chriſt, as if he had no holineſs, and were altogether an enemy to God: for he has no money or price to purchaſe this favour, and is continually running more in debt. And to plead his good character as proper to recommend him to the leaſt favour, would be highly diſpleaſing to God, and muſt be ſo to every good man, whether done by the ſinner himſelf, or any other perſon.

They who make the objection under conſideration, who think themſelves Chriſtians, and that they do exerciſe holineſs, may be aſked, whether they think this has raiſed them above the need of free grace and juſtification by the righteouſneſs of Chriſt, or at leaſt do not ſtand in ſo much need of it as they ſhould if they had no degree of holineſs. If they anſwer in the affirmative, they are not ſuch Chriſtians as was the apoſtle Paul. If they anſwer in the negative, and ſay that they are as dependent on the righteouſneſs of Chriſt for juſtification and all favour as if they were wholly unholy, and they expect to be ſaved by free grace as much as they could be if they could be ſaved in their ſins without any holineſs, that they are far from having any thing to boaſt of, and the more conformed they are to God in holineſs, or the more they ſee God and love him, the more they are diſpoſed to abaſe and humble themſelves before him, and feel their need of ſuch a Saviour as Jeſus Chriſt; then by this confeſſion they entirely give up their objection, and grant that whatever holineſs the ſinner may exerciſe previous to his juſtification, and in his coming to Chriſt for it, this does not make him the more deſerving of favour, nor does he ſtand in leſs need of juſtification by free grace through the worthineſs of Chriſt; and it will be ſo far from diſpoſing him to be proud, and boaſt, that it will bring him to humble himſelf at the foot of ſovereign, free grace, which humility will increaſe as he ſhall grow in grace, and in the knowledge of his Lord and Saviour Jeſus Chriſt.

But further to confute, if that be poſſible, and ſhow how falſe and abſurd the tenet is which we are oppoſing, it muſt be obſerved, 3. The

3. The holineſs which the ſinner exerciſes in believing on Chriſt and coming to him for all he wants, is ſo far from being the ground of pride and boaſting, or promoting and encouraging this, that it directly counteracts and deſtroys ſuch a diſpoſition. The ſinner's heart is naturally full of pride, and a diſpoſition which is gratified in ſelf exaltation and boaſting; and nothing can cure him of this reigning diſpoſition, and in any degree deſtroy his pride, but a change of heart by the Spirit of God, by which pride receives a deadly wound, and he is diſpoſed to humble himſelf in the ſight of God. And the grace he hereby receives and exerciſes conſiſts in diſcerning and confeſſing his ſinful, loſt ſtate, that the law he has tranſgreſſed is juſt and good, that he is infinitely vile and ill deſerving, that God may juſtly ſend him to endleſs deſtruction at any time, that he has nothing that can deſerve or recommend him to the leaſt favour, but every thing in every reſpect infinitely to the contrary: and in this view and ſenſe of his own character he comes to Chriſt as a poor, infinitely guilty and wretched ſinner, and begs for mercy, not for his own ſake, or for any thing he has done or ever ſhall do, but for the ſake of what Chriſt has ſuffered and done, pleaſed and hoping to be pardoned and received to favour by free, undeſerved grace through Jeſus Chriſt, deſiring forever to be abaſed and humbled, and that the moſt undeſerved, ſovereign grace may be exalted and honoured in his ſalvation.

Where is pride and boaſting then? It is effectually excluded and deſtroyed, by the exerciſe of that grace and holineſs by which the ſinner approves of the character and law of God, condemns himſelf as juſtly deſerving eternal miſery and nothing better, and looks to Chriſt for undeſerved, free pardon and favour to an infinitely guilty, odious, undeſerving, wretched beggar. He who can believe that ſuch exerciſes, which are according to the law of faith, are agreeable to the pride of man, and will lead to boaſting, may with as good reaſon believe that humility is pride, and ſelf abaſement is ſelf exaltation.

And

And beſides all this which has been now ſaid to confute this error, it muſt be obſerved, that they who exclude all holineſs from ſaving faith, by which the ſinner is juſtified, leſt if it were a holy exerciſe he would have reaſon to boaſt as having ſomething of his own to recommend himſelf, do ſuppoſe that a proud, impenitent enemy to God and his law, may ſee the truth, wiſdom and goodneſs of the goſpel, and approve of the character of Chriſt, and the way of ſalvation by him, which ſuppoſition is as unreaſonable and abſurd, and as contrary to the holy ſcripture, as can be made or conceived. And it is indeed moſt diſhonourable to Chriſt and the goſpel, as if his character was ſuch that a wicked man, an impenitent enemy of God, might diſcern the truth and excellency of it, and heartily approve and be pleaſed with it! How contrary is this to the declaration of Chriſt and his Apoſtle! The former ſays, "He that doth evil hateth the light, neither cometh to the light." And the latter, "The natural man receiveth not the things of the Spirit of God, for they are fooliſhneſs unto him, neither can he know them, becauſe they are ſpiritually diſcerned." *

* The importance that this groſs error, which is ſo unſcriptural and abſurd, and leads to ſo many hurtful conceptions of the law of faith, ſhould be wholly diſcarded, has been the motive to attempt thus to expoſe and confute it. Though it has been embraced by many in the proteſtant world, and there are thoſe who at this day contend for it, yet it is hoped that an effectual ſtop will be put to the continuance and ſpread of it. If they who have imbibed it, and are diſpoſed zealouſly to defend it, ſhould not be convinced of their miſtake, yet they who have not exploded, but have been rather favourable towards it and the doctrines which imply it, through want of conviction of thoſe truths by which it may be made to appear contrary to ſcripture, and a dangerous error, may, by attending to what has here been ſaid, be led to ſee their miſtake, and renounce it, with proper concern and zeal to ſuppreſs it, and vindicate the oppoſite truth. And they who are coming on the ſtage, and have not yet formed any opinion on this point, may be prevented imbibing this error, ſo that it may die with thoſe who now embrace it, and cannot be convinced of their error, and not be handed down to poſterity.

II. From

II. From this ſubject it appears, that ſaving faith, by which the juſt do live, is a very different thing from what many have imagined and taught.

Saving faith conſiſts in the diſcerning and belief of the truths of the goſpel, and cordial approbation of them, and conformity to them, which is peculiar to a renewed, wiſe and underſtanding heart. It implies the whole of evangelical holineſs, in the exerciſe of which men believe on Chriſt, receive him and cleave to him with purpoſe of heart, and walk in him, and by which he dwells in their hearts. It is the life of a Chriſtian, and is eſſential to all his holineſs, and cannot be diſtinguiſhed from it; for it all conſiſts in fighting the fight of faith, by which he lays hold of eternal life.

Therefore the faith by which ſinners are juſtified does not conſiſt in mere ſpeculation, or conviction and judgment and reaſon, conſidered as diſtinct from the heart and the exerciſes of that, or of the will and affections; which has been the opinion of many. It is preſumed enough has been ſaid fully to confute this notion.

Nor does ſaving faith conſiſt in the ſinner's believing and perſuaſion that he is juſtified, that Chriſt died for him, is his, ſo that he ſhall certainly be ſaved. This belief an impenitent enemy to Chriſt may entertain, and yet continue as impenitent and unholy as he was before. Beſides, there is no foundation for ſuch a perſuaſion or belief, antecedent to the exerciſe of ſaving faith, by and in conſequence of which a ſinner is juſtified; but it is perfect deluſion and falſehood. No ſuch thing is revealed in the Bible, that a ſinner is juſtified before he believes in Chriſt, cordially receives him, and is reconciled to God; but the contrary; that he is condemned, and under the wrath of God. Therefore a belief that his ſins are pardoned, and that God loves him, antecedent to his having an intereſt in Chriſt by cordially receiving him, is a deluſion, and is a perſuaſion grounded entirely on a falſe ſuggeſtion, either from his own heart, or the father of lies.

It

It has been ſaid, and publiſhed, in vindication of this ſort of faith, that men muſt believe that they are juſtified, &c. that by their believing it may become true, according to their faith; and therefore they muſt believe without any evidence of the truth of it, either from ſcripture, ſenſe or reaſon, that by their ſo believing it may become true. And indeed there is no other way to adhere to this notion of faith, but by embracing this maſs of abſurdity and nonſenſe.

Volumes have been written in this century by men in high repute for piety, in which this notion of faith runs through the whole; and they have been, and ſtill are, read by multitudes with high approbation. Without calling in queſtion the piety of the authors or their admirers, many, if not moſt of whom probably do not critically attend to their notion of faith, but to the good things which they have written; there is ſufficient warrant to ſay that this notion of faith is not only moſt contrary to the ſcriptures, but as unintelligible, and attended with as many abſurdities, as any religious tenet that was ever thought of and propagated by Mahomet, the Man of Sin, or any one elſe.

This notion of faith is not only in itſelf unſcriptural and moſt abſurd, but, conſidered in the tendency of it, and that with which it is connected, the dangerous and deſtructive conſequence of it will appear. They who entertain this notion of faith, ſuppoſe that the impenitent enemy of God, upon believing that God loves him, that his ſins are pardoned, &c. does begin to repent and love God, &c. becauſe he is perſuaded that God loves him and will ſave him; that by this belief, and under this perſuaſion, the ſinner is converted, and becomes a true friend of God, and a real Chriſtian. They ſay that a ſinner cannot be brought to love God, until he firſt ſees or believes that God loves him, or is in ſome manner and degree become propitious to him; that a ſight and real belief of this is effectual to induce him to love God, and live a holy life. This makes his converſion and all his love and holineſs to be nothing but ſelfiſhneſs and pride;

pride; and such a conversion does not imply any change of heart for the better, but for the worse, and all his supposed holiness is nothing but selfishness and sin, which the worst of men may practise, and continue real enemies to the true character of God. The Lord Jesus Christ has decided this in the most plain and express words: "If ye love them which love you, what thank have ye? for sinners also love those that love them."

The Christian, *after* he has believed and embraced the gospel, and is justified, may, on reflecting on his own state and exercises, have good evidence that he does love Christ, and is a true believer; and therefore that he is justified and shall be saved; this consequently he may believe, and in this way obtain the "assurance of hope." But this is not saving faith, or any part of it; for saving faith must take place *before* he is justified, and there must be ground of evidence that he has saving faith, *before* he can have any reason to believe that he is in a state of justification, and shall be saved.*

III. From the view we have had of the law of faith we may see the reason why men are naturally opposed to the gospel, and refuse to comply with it, viz. because holiness is necessarily implied in an approbation of it and cordially embracing it. Therefore faith is the gift of God. In order to believe on Christ, a man must be born again of the Spirit of God, have a new heart given to him, and be made a new creature, friendly to true holiness.

* This subject is more largely and very particularly considered by Dr. *Bellamy* in his "Theron, Paulinus and Aspasio; or, Letters and Dialogues, upon the Nature of Love to God, Faith in Christ, and Assurance of Eternal Life," and in his "Essay on the Nature and Glory of the Gospel of Jesus Christ:" which books may be recommended to all who desire to be well acquainted with the subject, and form their judgment according to the truth.

This subject is also discussed by President *Edwards*, in his "Discourses on Justification by Faith alone," and by the Author in his "System of Doctrines, contained in Divine Revelation," vol. ii. chap. iv. section vi. "Concerning Saving Faith;" and section xi. "Concerning Believers' Assurance of Salvation."

This is therefore abundantly aſſerted in the ſcriptures. It will be ſufficient here to refer to the words of the apoſtle John: "Whoſoever believeth that Jeſus is the Chriſt, is born of God."

If the goſpel were an inſtitution which might be approved of, believed and truly embraced, by an unholy heart, an unregenerate man; it would not be an holy inſtitution, and therefore could not be from God. Jeſus Chriſt is a holy Saviour; holineſs is eſſential to every part of his character, to all his words and works. Salvation by him is a holy ſalvation, and the way of ſalvation is wiſe and holy in every view of it. It is therefore impoſſible that an unholy heart ſhould come near to this Saviour with the leaſt inclination towards him, and the way of ſalvation by him; but ſuch an heart muſt hate him, and chooſe to keep at a diſtance from him and avoid him; and can be no more reconciled to him and the goſpel, than to the holy law of God.

How degrading and diſhonourable to Chriſt and the goſpel then, and how unreaſonable and abſurd, is their notion, who hold that the goſpel is ſuited to pleaſe and win the heart of an unregenerate man, ſo that while he hates God's holy law, he with an unholy heart embraces the goſpel, and in this way and by this means his heart is changed, and he becomes friendly to God and his holy law! When ſhall the profeſſed friends of the goſpel ceaſe to diſhonour and pervert it, in order to ſuit it to the taſte and inclination of an unholy heart?

IV. We hence learn that all the intereſts of true virtue and holineſs are as much and as well ſecured and promoted by the law of faith, as they are or can be by the law of works.

Many have thought that the doctrine of juſtification by faith, through the atonement and merit of Chriſt, not being in the leaſt recommended to this favour by any works or holineſs of our own, is a licentious doctrine, and tends to influence men to neglect a holy life, and give themſelves to ſloth and ſin. But this has been wholly owing to their ignorance of the ſubject.

According

According to the law of faith, true holineſs is as neceſſary in order to juſtification, as if the ſinner were juſtified by the merit of his works, though in a different way and for a different reaſon, as has been ſhewn. Faith itſelf, by which the ſinner receives Chriſt, and renounces all dependence on his own holineſs to recommend him to the leaſt favour, and relies on free, undeſerved grace for the juſtification of one infinitely unworthy and ill-deſerving; this faith itſelf is a holy exerciſe, as has been proved; and men cannot live by faith but by living an holy life.

As real holineſs in love to the character of God and his law is exerciſed in approving of the character of Chriſt, and coming to him and truſting in him for pardon, juſtification and eternal life, as can be in obeying the law of God, as the price of the divine favour, according to the law of works. Holineſs is as really and neceſſarily exerciſed in applying to God as an infinitely gracious and bountiful benefactor, and gratefully receiving of him infinite favour and bleſſings as a free gift to the infinitely guilty and ill-deſerving, as is or can be exerciſed in obedience to his authority and law as a recommendation to and enjoyment of his favour and bleſſing.

And as obedience and holineſs is as neceſſary according to the law of faith, as it is according to the law of works, in order to juſtification and eternal life; ſo there is not merely as much, but much greater, encouragement to practiſe it, and the obligations and motives to the exerciſe of holineſs, in love to God and man, are greatly increaſed, and rendered unſpeakably greater and ſtronger, by the law of faith.

How wholly groundleſs and unreaſonable, and contrary to truth, fact and experience, is the objection to the law of faith, according to which "a man is juſtified by faith, without the deeds of the law," or not by the law of works, that this renders unneceſſary, and is a diſcouragement to holineſs and good works, and encourages licentiouſneſs and ſin!

V. This

V. This ſubject opens an eaſy and plain way, and perhaps the only ſatisfactory and true way, to reconcile the two apoſtles, Paul and James, in what they ſay of that by which ſinners are juſtified. St. Paul has ſaid, "Therefore we conclude, that a man is juſtified by faith, without the deeds of the law; knowing that a man is not juſtified by the works of the law, but by the faith of Jeſus Chriſt." St. James has ſaid, "Ye ſee then how that by works a man is juſtified, and not by faith only." It has been raſhly thought by ſome that the apoſtles in theſe words expreſsly contradict each other; but their perfect conſiſtence and agreement with each other will appear only by obſerving the different ſenſe in which they uſe the word *works*, which is evident by all they ſay on the point.

Paul expreſsly defines the works which he excludes from the law of faith, and ſets in oppoſition to it. They are *the works of the law*, the ſame with the law of works, meaning works done in order to recommend to favour, as a price offered to purchaſe and merit acceptance and juſtification of God, as has been repreſented and explained. By works James means Chriſtian holineſs and obedience, which is the ſame with the law of faith, which has been explained. By works James means that love, in all its operations and fruits, which he ſays is the life and ſoul of faith, and without which there cannot be any true faith. His words are, "For as the body without the Spirit is dead, ſo faith without works is dead alſo. Seeſt thou how faith wrought with his works, and by works was faith made perfect?" How could he more ſtrongly aſſert the holineſs of ſaving faith, when he ſays that holy love, the root and eſſence of all Chriſtian obedience and good works, is as much the life and active nature of a living, ſaving faith, as the ſpirit is the life and activity of the body? How contrary is this to ſaying, as many have done, that holy love, which implies and comprehends all the obedience and good works of a Chriſtian, is *the effect* and conſequence of faith, and produced by faith, as the cauſe produces the effect!

Paul

Paul agrees with James perfectly in his description of saving faith. He says, "Faith worketh by love," that is, Love, which is the essence of all Christian obedience, and implies all good works, is the soul and active life of faith, by which it operates, or acts and works, as the spirit is the life of the body, by which it moves and acts.

VI. This subject may be improved by those who have attended to it, as affording matter by which they may examine themselves, whether their conversion and consequent religion be true and genuine, or false and spurious.

Have you been effectually cured of a disposition to trust to your own righteousness, and renounced and become dead to the law of works, under a clear conviction that you were cursed by it, notwithstanding any thing you could do, and that you should be justly accursed forever, unless you obtained relief by the law of faith, trusting in the merit and righteousness of Christ for pardon and justification?

And have you been led to understand and cordially to embrace the law of faith, in which you highly approved of the character of Christ, and the way of salvation by him, condemning yourself as being so far from having or doing any thing to recommend you to God, or render you deserving, that you were infinitely guilty and ill-deserving?

Have you felt and experienced this law of faith, suited to destroy your pride, and set you at the greatest distance from boasting, and the more you understood and cordially embraced this way of salvation, the more disposed you have been to humble yourself in the sight of the Lord?

Do you know that your heart was naturally as much opposed to the gospel, as it was to the holy law of God, and that, had not God given you a new heart by regeneration, you should have continued an enemy to Christ? that the law of faith is a holy law, and that it cannot be complied with by a heart unfriendly to God and

and holineſs? that the more you attend to and are pleaſed with the law of faith, the greater is your averſion from ſin, and the more you long to be holy, and hunger and thirſt after righteouſneſs?

Are you deſiring and looking for that evidence that you are juſtified and ſhall be ſaved, which ariſes from a conſciouſneſs that you do embrace the goſpel, and have thoſe holy exerciſes which imply this, or are implied in conforming to the law of faith? and do you deſire no other evidence but this, that your juſtification may be proved only by good evidence that you are ſanctified?

## Sermon XVII.

WRITTEN IN THE YEAR 1789.

Eccl. iii. 14. *I know that whatſoever God doth, it ſhall be forever: nothing can be put to it, nor any thing taken from it; and God doth it, that men ſhould fear before him.*

WE may be ſure that the Infinitely Great, Eternal, Omniſcent Being, who is the Firſt and the Laſt, the Almighty, *does nothing* for an end, or with a view to accompliſh any deſign, which is temporary, and ſhall wholly ceaſe and come to nothing, ſo that every thing which remains ſhall, in all reſpects, be juſt as it would have been *had he not done it.* For this would be infinitely unworthy of ſuch a Being, infinitely beneath him, and unbecoming his character: it would be really more unbecoming and trifling, than for a man to do all he does through life for no end at all, were this poſſible; or for the greateſt monarch on earth to ſpend his life in action for no higher and more important ends than thoſe which children have in what they do. That which ceaſes to exiſt in all its effects and conſequences, ſo that the

the univerſe is in no reſpect better or otherwiſe than if it had not been, is of infinitely leſs worth and importance, than that of which the conſequence and good effect, or the end of which, is *without end*, or forever. Therefore the Infinitely Great, Wiſe and Good Being will do nothing but that which ſhall anſwer an end which never ſhall ceaſe, ſo that the conſequence and good effect of it ſhall exiſt forever.

If this viſible world were to ceaſe to exiſt, and every effect and conſequence of its having exiſted were to ceaſe forever, ſo that no end were to be anſwered by it but what took place during the exiſtence of it; and no exiſtence, or circumſtance of exiſtence, ſhould be in any reſpect otherwiſe than if it had not exiſted; it would have been created, and preſerved during the exiſtence of it, in a great meaſure, if not altogether, in vain. It is certain no end would be anſwered worthy of the Infinite Creator. There would really nothing be gained by ſuch a work; all would be loſt. Therefore we may be ſure that none of the works of GOD are of this kind, but every thing that he does, will, in the effect and conſequence of it, exiſt forever, or the end to be anſwered by it will never ceaſe.

The natural world which we behold, with all the works of man in it, is to come to an end, at leaſt as to the form in which it now exiſts, when the end of the exiſtence of it is anſwered, but that end which was deſigned to be accompliſhed by the creation and continuation of the exiſtence of it will remain forever. The natural world, the ſun, moon and ſtars, with this earth, and all the creatures and things contained in them, which are not capable of moral agency, and moral government—the *natural world* was created, and is upheld, for the ſake of the *moral world*, and thoſe creatures which are capable of moral government, and of conformity to God in moral exerciſes; as a houſe is built, not for its own ſake, but for the ſake of thoſe who are to live in it. And when this world, having anſwered the end with reſpect to the moral world for which it was made and preſerved,

ed, ſhall be burnt up, the moral world, and all moral agents, will continue forever, with all the effects and conſequences of the natural world, reſpecting the moral world, which were deſigned to be produced by creation and providence.

Hence it is demonſtrably certain that moral agents, at leaſt ſome of them; and if *ſome* why not all? will exiſt without end; for they cannot anſwer the end of their exiſtence, and the end of all thoſe works of God which he has done for their ſake, if they ſhould ceaſe to exiſt: they muſt therefore exiſt forever.

It will appear evident and certain, no doubt, if duly conſidered, that moral government cannot be perfectly or properly exerciſed, unleſs it be endleſs, and conſequently, unleſs moral agents, the only ſubjects of this government, continue to exiſt forever. This is evident from the text we are conſidering, and what has been obſerved upon it. But the evidence of this ariſes from another view of this point. Moral government cannot be exerciſed without a law pointing out and requiring the duty of moral agents, and fixing the penalty of diſobedience, and maintaining and executing this law, agreeable to the requirements and ſanctions of it. The puniſhment which a tranſgreſſion of the divine law deſerves is endleſs evil or ſuffering; and therefore this muſt be the penalty of the law of God, and muſt be executed on the tranſgreſſor, unleſs ſomething can take place to anſwer the ſame end; therefore he upon whom this penalty is executed, muſt exiſt forever, in order to ſuffer the penalty of the law. And although it be not eſſential to the law of God, that there ſhould be an expreſs promiſe of endleſs life to the obedient, yet the threatening of evil to the tranſgreſſor ſeems to imply favor to the obedient, and is inconſiſtent with putting an end to their exiſtence, and depriving them of endleſs happineſs, which in their view, and in reality, would be an infinite *negative evil;* and therefore muſt be inconſiſtent with the wiſdom and goodneſs of God, yea, with his diſtributive juſtice; for they deſerve no evil,

ſo

ſo long as they continue obedient. Therefore nothing but tranſgreſſion can put an end to the exiſtence and happineſs of a moral agent: it hence follows that they who perſevere in obedience muſt exiſt happy forever, and they who tranſgreſs muſt ſuffer evil without end; conſequently every moral agent muſt exiſt forever, in order to the proper and full exerciſe of moral government. Therefore whatever God does reſpecting moral agents, (and he has reſpect to theſe in all he does) in this ſenſe, ſhall be *forever;* he has a view to an endleſs duration, and aims at an end which never ſhall ceaſe, but muſt exiſt forever.

It has been obſerved, that the moral world is the end of all God's works; and that the ſubjects of moral government muſt exiſt forever; and that, in this ſenſe, all that God does ſhall be forever. But the ſubjects of moral government, and all the events that immediately relate to them, do not comprehend all the moral world: God himſelf muſt be conſidered as included in this everlaſting, moral kingdom, as the Supreme Head and Eternal King of it. And he, being infinitely greater, more important and worthy of regard than any or all creatures, muſt therefore be the end of all that is done: that is, he muſt make himſelf the higheſt and laſt end, and do all *for himſelf*, as the ſcripture aſſerts: "The Lord hath made all things *for himſelf.*" The exerciſe, manifeſtation and diſplay of his own perfections and glory muſt be the ſupreme end of all the works of God, which neceſſarily includes the greateſt poſſible happineſs of the obedient ſubjects of his moral kingdom; which therefore muſt be forever, or without end: for a temporary diſplay of the Divine Glory, and the temporary happineſs and glory of the moral kingdom of God, would be infinitely leſs than an eternal and increaſing duration of theſe, and nothing in compariſon with this. In this view, we ſee how whatſoever God doth is forever. His deſign in all he does is his own glory, in his everlaſting kingdom. This is his end, and the iſſue of all is this, which ſhall have no end. The kingdom of

God is an *everlasting* kingdom, and of his dominion and glory there will be no end; which is abundantly asserted in scripture, we all know. And this kingdom, glory and dominion is the end of all God's works. Therefore every thing he doth shall be forever; it hath no end in his design, and in the effect and consequence. Nothing can be more certain than this.

2. It is asserted in these words, that God has fixed a plan of operation, including all his works, all he doth or will do in time and to eternity; and that he is executing this plan or design in all he doth: all his works having reference to this, and being included in it. This is implied in the former particular. For if in all God doth he hath respect to that which is endless, he must have formed a design, and fixed a plan of operation, which is endless, including all he will do, and all events, to eternity. This the scripture abundantly asserts: "He worketh all things according to the counsel of his own will. The counsel of the Lord standeth forever, and the thoughts of his heart to all generations:" [*Psal.* xxxiii. 11.] "He is in one mind, and who can turn him? And what his soul desireth, even that he doth:" [*Job* xxiii. 13.] "Known unto God are all his works from the beginning of the world:" [*Acts* xv. 18.] And, if we attend to the point, we cannot but know that it must be so, it being impossible that it should be otherwise; for to suppose the contrary is to suppose God is *changeable*, which is inconsistent with infinite perfection, and with his being infallible, and to be trusted in all cases. Indeed, if there were not a Being who is *unchangeable*, there would be no God. Besides, if God be infinite in power, knowledge, wisdom and goodness, which he certainly is, then he is able, and could not but fix upon a plan of operation, including all he would do, all his works of creation and providence, without end, or forever. He could not but propose an end of all his works, and lay the wisest plan to accomplish that end. Not to do this must manifest want of wisdom, or of ability, and therefore would be inconsistent with

infinite

infinite power and wiſdom. It is impoſſible he ſhould not know what is wiſeſt and beſt to be done in every inſtance to eternity: he is able to do it, for nothing can be in the way to prevent his doing it: and it is equally impoſſible he ſhould be infinitely wiſe and good, and not fix upon and execute the wiſeſt and beſt plan of operation. Nothing can be more evident and *certain* than this. Well may we join with Solomon, and ſay, "*We know*, that whatſoever God doth, it ſhall be forever." He has propoſed infinitely the beſt poſſible end, which cannot be accompliſhed in time, but by an everlaſting ſeries of works: he has fixed upon the wiſeſt plan to anſwer this end, and all he doth has reference to this end: and the effect and conſequence of all his works, for the ſake of which they are done, will remain forever.

Let us now proceed to conſider the following words: "Nothing can be put to it, nor any thing taken from it." Theſe are part of the ſame ſentence, and have reſpect to the foregoing, and aſſert, that nothing can be put or added to what God doth, or taken from it. In theſe words the following particulars are expreſſed or implied; which alſo imply each other.

1. Theſe words contain a more ſtrong and expreſs declaration than the foregoing; That the divine plan of his endleſs operations, including every thing which he doth and will do to eternity, is unalterably fixed, ſo that it is impoſſible that any change or alteration ſhould be made, in any reſpect, or in the leaſt degree. His deſigns are fixed from eternity. He has determined what he will do, and what he will not do, in every inſtance, greater or leſs. And his plan admits of no alteration; nothing can be added to it, or taken from it. It has been obſerved, that this is abundantly aſſerted in ſcripture, and that reaſon teaches it muſt be ſo; and that to deny this, or ever doubt it, is to deny or doubt of the exiſtence of a God, ſupreme, omnipotent, infinitely, intelligent, wiſe and good.

2. Theſe

2. Theſe words imply that all things, and every event from the greateſt to the leaſt, from the firſt to the laſt, are included in the divine plan, and are unalterably fixed by the counſel and decree of God. This muſt be ſo, unleſs creatures and things may exiſt, and events may take place, independent of God, and with which his power and operation has no concern, without the leaſt dependence on his determination and will, and, it may be, contrary to it: which no rational man can admit, as it is abſolutely impoſſible.

If all the works of God are known to him, which they could not be, unleſs he had determined and fixed what he will do; then every thing, every event which ſhall take place or exiſt, muſt be known, and conſequently certain, and made ſo by the divine decree, determining what he would do. If any one event, even the leaſt that can take place, were not fixed, but uncertain whether it will take place or not; then what God will do, ſo far as his works reſpect that event, muſt be uncertain, and cannot be known or fixed. Therefore God, by determining his own works, equally determined and fixed what every creature ſhould be and do, as the latter is neceſſarily included in the former. The divine will and operation has reſpect to, and concern with, every thing, every event, even the leaſt that takes place; and it comes to paſs and actually exiſts by ſome act of his, without which it could not take place, whether it be in the natural or moral world. The exiſtence, the time and circumſtances of the exiſtence, of every *bird*, even the leaſt, and the time and means of its beginning and ceaſing to exiſt, are all fixed by what God does. Every hair of our heads, and of every head, and creature, that ever did or ſhall exiſt, is made by God. He numbers them all, and orders every circumſtance, the growth, length, bigneſs, uſe, decay and loſs, or diſpoſal, of each one. Every tree on the earth, every plant, leaf and ſpire of graſs, he produces by his power, energy and care. He cauſes every drop of rain or hail, and every flake of ſnow, that falls, and determines the bigneſs, the ſhape and time of the

the falling of each one. All these are the work of God, as are innumerable others, whether greater or less. These therefore must be all fixed from eternity, by Him who worketh all things according to the counsel of his own will.

And it is equally certain that every event, and all that comes to pass in the *moral world*, depends upon the will and determination of God, and could not exist, if he determined and did nothing concerning it. Every action of moral agents, and every perception, motion and every thought which takes place in their hearts or minds, is comprehended in what God doth, and is effected by his power and operation. "The heart of the king," and consequently of all men, "is in the hand of the Lord, as the rivers of water: *he turneth it whithersoever he will.*" Every thing in the moral world, even the least motion and thought of the heart, is of unspeakably more importance than the events in the natural world, and are as much dependent on the will and operation of God; and therefore must be as much fixed and certain. And this is necessarily implied, in God's determining and fixing what he will do, so that there can be no alteration of his plan of operation; nothing put to it, or taken from it, for it comprehends *all things*, and all events, great and small, which shall take place and exist from the beginning of time, to eternity.

Thus certain is it from this text, as well as from innumerable other passages of scripture, and from the reason and nature of things, that God has, by determining what he would do, necessarily "foreordained *whatsoever comes to pass.*"

3. These words assert that the divine plan of operation, which is endless, and includes all things and every event that ever did or shall take place, is the wisest and *best* that can be; so that to make any alteration in it, in any respect or the least degree, to take any thing from it, or add any thing to it, which is not included in it, would render it less perfect, wise and good. In this respect, "nothing can be put to it, nor any thing taken from it," without

without hurting or marring it, and rendering it leſs perfect, wiſe and good; therefore it is impoſſible there ſhould be the leaſt alteration, in any thing or circumſtance, ſo long as God is omnipotent, infinitely wiſe and good. "His work is perfect;" which includes the whole created univerſe, with every thing from the greateſt to the leaſt, and all events and circumſtances of events, even the moſt minute and inconſiderable, which take place in time and eternity. It is impoſſible it ſhould be otherwiſe, if God be omnipotent, infinitely wiſe and good. The work of ſuch a Being muſt be, like himſelf, *abſolutely perfect.* He muſt know what was the moſt wiſe and beſt plan, and therefore the moſt deſirable. He was able to form and execute ſuch a plan, and his wiſdom and goodneſs muſt be pleaſed with it: which will anſwer the beſt end, and includes all poſſible good, and excludes every thing which would render it leſs perfect, and is, on the whole, undeſirable. Of this we may be as certain as we can be that there is a God, who is ſupreme, omnipotent, infinitely wiſe and good, who hath done, and will do, what he pleaſes, in heaven and on earth, and in all the created univerſe, and that *forever.*

Thus we find Solomon aſſerting, in the words under conſideration, what he *knew* to be an important and moſt evident and certain truth, viz. that God's plan of operation is endleſs, is unalterably fixed, and comprehends all things, and all events which ever exiſt or take place, and that this divine plan, including all the created univerſe, and every event and circumſtance which will take place to eternity, is moſt wiſe and good, being abſolutely perfect; ſo that nothing can be put to it, nor any thing taken from it, without making it leſs perfect and good. This truth is abundantly aſſerted in divine revelation, and is evident to a demonſtration from the reaſon and nature of things. And to deny or doubt of it, is in effect to deny or doubt of the being of a God, who is ſupreme, infinitely wiſe and good. This truth is conciſely, though fully, expreſſed by the Aſſembly

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of Divines at Weſtminiſter, in their ſhorter catechiſm, in the following words: "The decrees of God are his eternal purpoſe, according to the counſel of his own will, whereby, for his own glory, he hath foreordained *whatſoever comes to paſs*. And *he executeth his decrees* in the works of creation and providence. His works of providence are, his moſt holy, wiſe and powerful preſerving and governing all his creatures, and *all their actions*."

This is a doctrine of divine revelation, and moſt agreeable to reaſon, to wiſdom, and benevolence; and they who exerciſe theſe, in any good degree, muſt be pleaſed with it. For, according to this, nothing does or can take place, but that which is wiſeſt and beſt, and neceſſary for the greateſt general good; every thing and every event, the greateſt and the leaſt, being under the direction of infinite wiſdom, rectitude and benevolence, and ordained and fixed by theſe. To have ſuch a plan, which includes all the works of God, and every event, motion and action in the creation, in time and to eternity, formed by infinite wiſdom and goodneſs, exactly ſuited to accompliſh the beſt end, including all poſſible good, and excluding every thing which, on the whole, is undeſirable; to have ſuch a plan, unalterably fixed forever, ſo that nothing can be put to it, nor any thing taken from it, muſt be moſt agreeable to the upright, wiſe and good: and that perſon who *underſtandingly* oppoſes it, and whoſe *heart* is diſpleaſed with it, muſt be wholly deſtitute of all theſe.

This is ſuited to pleaſe the truly pious mind, to ſupport and comfort ſuch an one, and to excite all thoſe affections and exerciſes in which true, genuine piety conſiſts. And all the truths and facts included in this divine, unalterable plan, are adapted to promote and effect the moſt perfect virtue, piety and holineſs: and were not this a truth, there could not be any ſuch thing as piety or true religion among creatures.

This leads to conſider and explain the concluding words

words in the text, in which this is aſſerted: "And God doth it, that men ſhould fear before him."

By the fear of God, fearing him, or fearing before him, which is the ſame, is meant the exerciſe of that true piety and religion which is peculiar to good men, and diſtinguiſhes them from the wicked. In this ſenſe the phraſe is uſed in numerous places both in the Old Teſtament and the New, of which every one muſt be ſenſible who reads the Bible with attention and care. It is needleſs therefore to mention paſſages to prove it; I ſhall, however, cite *one*, which is in this book; [*chap.* viii. 12, 13:] "Surely I know that it ſhall be well with them that *fear God, which fear before him:* but it ſhall not be well with the wicked, *becauſe he feareth not before God.*"

"*God doth it*, that men may fear before him;" That is, he has formed this wiſe and perfect plan of operation, which is unalterable, as the proper and only foundation of the exerciſe of piety and holineſs by creatures; and every thing God does in executing this plan is ſuited to excite and promote this, and bring it to the greater perfection, which is included in his endleſs deſign; and holineſs ſhall be exerciſed in the moſt perfect manner and degree, and flouriſh under the beſt advantages, in his kingdom, *forever*. This is God's everlaſting end, for which he does and orders every thing and event in the univerſe, viz. his own glory, manifeſted and diſplayed in the everlaſting holineſs and happineſs of creatures, in his eternal kingdom. And the exiſtence and knowledge of ſuch a fixed and endleſs plan of divine operation is the only proper foundation for the exerciſe of true piety; it is ſuited to excite the exerciſe of holineſs in creatures; and there cannot be any true piety which is exerciſed and practiſed in oppoſition to this truth, but all true religion is in perfect conformity with it.

This I ſhall endeavour to illuſtrate and prove by conſidering what true piety is, by mentioning the ſeveral branches of it, in which it is exerciſed; and, at the ſame time, ſhowing that theſe exerciſes of piety are conſiſtent with

with this truth, and naturally flow from it as the proper foundation of them.

1. LOVE to GOD is neceſſarily included in true piety; ſo that where there is no degree of this there is no real religion. Indeed, this comprehends all the exerciſes of piety, and is the ſum and whole of it, as every exerciſe of piety, called by different names, and differing in ſome reſpects, are only different modifications of this ſame affection of LOVE. Therefore *love* to God is required, as comprehending every exerciſe of true piety. "Thou ſhalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart, and with all thy ſoul, and with all thy mind. This is the firſt and great commandment." That is all the affection that is required, as it immediately reſpects God, and therefore includes the whole of true piety. This love conſiſts in benevolence or friendly affection towards God, complacency and delight in him, and gratitude to him. Benevolence regards him as at the head of the univerſe, infinitely great, omnipotent and ſupreme; all the creation being as nothing, compared with him, and abſolutely in his hands and at his controul, made and uſed for him; He being the only neceſſary and all-important Being, his intereſt, honour and glory being the ſupreme end of all, while he is capable of infinite felicity, and actually poſſeſſes it, being unchangeable in his being, perfections, deſigns and happineſs, infinitely wiſe, righteous and good;—I ſay, benevolence regards God as *ſuch a Being*, and is gratified and pleaſed in the higheſt degree in ſuch a character; and the language of the benevolent heart is, "Let God reign forever in unchangeable felicity and glory: let him be glorified by all things, and his praiſe be without end; let his counſel ſtand forever, and let it be impoſſible that any thing ſhould exiſt or take place but what he orders, and ſays, *Let it be:* Be thou exalted, O Lord, above the heavens, and thy glory above all the earth! Let his infinitely wiſe, righteous and benevolent will be done in heaven and earth, and through all his dominions, forever and ever, Amen."

Is it not eaſy to ſee, muſt it not appear with irreſiſtible evidence, to all who will calmly attend, that every benevolent friend of God muſt be pleaſed that he has laid and fixed an unalterable plan, ſuch as beſt pleaſed him, comprehending every thing and all events that are deſirable, and neceſſary to anſwer the beſt purpoſe, to eternity, he being, in this, independent, and infinitely above the controul of creatures; ſo that it is impoſſible that it ſhould not take place, in every particular, and moſt minute circumſtance, juſt as he has determined from eternity, without a poſſibility of his being croſſed or diſappointed in any inſtance? And is not all this comprehended in the pious, benevolent boaſt and exultation of the Pſalmiſt? "But *our God* is in the heavens; *he hath done whatſoever he pleaſed.* For I know that the Lord is great, and that *our Lord is above all gods.* Whatſoever the Lord *pleaſed, that did he* in heaven and in earth, in the ſeas, and in all deep places." Such a Being, proſecuting, without a poſſibility of any miſtake or hindrance, ſuch a grand, comprehenſive, eternal plan, formed and fixed by infinite wiſdom and benevolence, muſt be the higheſt poſſible object of the benevolence of man, and is moſt perfectly, and to the higheſt degree, ſuited to pleaſe and gratify ſuch an affection; on which it may expatiate with the higheſt pleaſure, and without limitation as to the object, and with increaſing ſtrength, forever.

But if there be no ſuch ſupreme, independent Being, who is able to propoſe and effect the greateſt poſſible good, and is infinitely engaged to do it, and has laid an unalterable plan, including every thing that is wiſe and good, and nothing but what is moſt agreeable to infinite benevolence, the whole being conſidered together, but many events have already taken place, the exiſtence of which are diſagreeable to infinite wiſdom and benevolence, all things conſidered, which are not included in the moſt wiſe and benevolent plan, but have taken place independent of God, and exiſt contrary to his will that they ſhould exiſt, and ſo that God will not be ſo much glorified nor ſo happy as he would have been had they not

not taken place, and there will be much leſs good in the univerſe forever than there might have been had they been prevented; then there is no God to be loved, and be the object of benevolent, friendly affection, which ſhall be completely pleaſed and ſatisfied in him. For he muſt be either impotent and dependent, and unable to effect that which is moſt agreeable to wiſdom and goodneſs, and therefore is diſappointed and croſſed, if he be wiſe and good; or he has no wiſdom or goodneſs, though he is omnipotent, and ſo has ſuffered that to take place which was not beſt on the whole, that it ſhould exiſt, and is contrary to benevolence and wiſdom, when he was able to prevent it, if he pleaſed. If the latter were true, all muſt acknowledge he could not be the object of love, of benevolent, friendly affection. And if the former, and not the latter, were true, all muſt be ſenſible that he could not be an object with which benevolent affection can be pleaſed and ſatisfied: but if it were exerciſed towards him, it muſt be in pity and grief for him, and inextinguiſhable ſorrow that he was not able to lay and proſecute the beſt plan without interruption, but is dependent, diſappointed and croſſed, and moſt unhappy, and muſt be ſo forever! The benevolent friends to ſuch a Being, and to benevolence, muſt be croſſed and miſerable, in proportion to the degree of their benevolence, while the enemies to ſuch a Being, were it poſſible there could be ſuch an one, which, bleſſed be God! it is not, would be gratified and triumph. And as ſuch a Being muſt be infinitely leſs important and glorious, he muſt be an infinitely leſs worthy object of benevolence, than he whom the truth we are vindicating deſcribes.

And ſurely every one who attends properly muſt ſee that, on this laſt ſuppoſition, ſuch a Being could not be the object of the complacency and delight of a benevolent heart. This is clear, from what has been ſaid reſpecting benevolence: for pious, holy complacency and delight in an object or character, is nothing different from the ſatisfaction and pleaſure which benevolence has in that being or character. Therefore if there be any thing

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in a being contrary and displeasing to benevolence, and opposed to what that seeks, it must be equally opposed to complacency and delight, and contrary to it. To suppose the contrary is a flat contradiction.

It is equally apparent that the God who is exhibited in our text, as it has been now understood and explained, must be the first and highest object of complacential love, as it has been shewn that he is suited to gratify and please benevolence to the highest degree; for the pleasure which the benevolent heart takes in any object, is the same with complacence and delight in that object, as has been just now observed. Therefore that being or character with which the benevolent heart is most pleased and gratified, is the supreme object of complacential love.

The benevolent heart must be pleased with unbounded, infinite benevolence, clothed with omnipotence, fixing and executing an endless plan, including the highest possible good, in which God will be glorified in the highest degree, and his servants and kingdom most happy and glorious forever, and which admits no evil but that which is necessary to answer the best end, and promote the greatest good, and render the system, the universal plan, infinitely better, more wise and beautiful, than it could be, were the evil excluded. Such a Being, of unchangeable perfection, infinite benevolence, wisdom, rectitude, truth and faithfulness, must be embraced by the benevolent heart, with the warmest and most strong affection; he must be chosen as the supreme good, as the object of the highest complacence and delight. God is exhibited to such a mind as such a Being, and in this amiable light, in forming and executing such a plan, comprehending all possible good, and including every thing that exists, and every event that shall take place to eternity; being exactly suited, in every respect, to manifest and display the divine perfection and glory, in the felicity and glory of his eternal kingdom, and which could not be altered, in the least degree, without rendering it less perfect and good. On this

this Being, and on such a system, including all things that exist, or shall take place—on this absolutely and infinitely perfect Being, and his all-perfect work, the pious mind will dwell with increasing satisfaction and ever fresh delight forever and ever. But were there no unchangeable God, absolutely independent and sovereign, and doing whatsoever he pleases, forming and executing the wisest and best plan of operation to eternity, and including and fixing every event, there would be no such object of supreme affection and delight to the pious, benevolent mind, to be embraced with unreserved love, and unlimited or unalloyed satisfaction and pleasure. Yea, were this God and his plan of operation capable of any possible alteration or change, to eternity, it would give pain to the benevolent heart, and be an eternal impediment to perfect *love* and happiness.

The person whose heart is wholly selfish, and knows not what *disinterested love* means, and whose mind is consequently contracted down to his own *little self*, and fixed on his own personal concerns, does not extend his thoughts and affections to those grand objects, the glory of God, and the greatest general good of the universe. He really loves nothing but himself; and he cannot be pleased with a God on whom he is wholly dependent, unless he knows, or thinks he knows, that he is wholly devoted to his interest, and will accomplish all his *selfish* desires and wishes. He must be displeased with, he must *hate*, a God who is of *one mind*, and cannot be turned by him; who has fixed his plan of working, including every thing that takes place; and who is unchangeably seeking the greatest general good of the universe, however inconsistent this may be with *his particular interest and happiness;* and who will not regard that, but give it up, whenever the greatest public good requires it; being determined, without a possibility of change, to punish forever every persevering enemy to his character and government. Such a creature cannot love any God, unless he will conform to his will, and is, in some measure at least, dependent on him, and waits on him to

to know what he will chooſe and do, independent of God, before he can determine any thing reſpecting him; ſo that he himſelf ſhall *independently* turn the ſcale in every thing that concerns himſelf; and God muſt attend him as his tool or ſervant, to conſult his intereſt, and anſwer his ends. The language of his heart is, "I would not have a God abſolutely independent, and unchangeable in his deſigns and decrees, reſpecting me and my intereſt. What is the glory of God, and the general good, to *me*, if my own perſonal intereſt and happineſs be not regarded and included; if my ſelfiſh inclination and will be not gratified, but croſſed? I cannot love ſuch a God." Directly the reverſe of this is the feeling and language of the benevolent heart, which has been repreſented above.

I proceed to conſider *love* as it is exerciſed and expreſſed in *gratitude;* and to ſhew that the God of the Bible, who worketh *all things* after the counſel of his own will, and is executing a plan in the moſt wiſe manner, ſuited to anſwer the beſt end, and which comprehends all his works, and every event through endleſs duration, that *this God* is the proper, infinite object of the pious, everlaſting gratitude of a benevolent heart. Benevolence or goodneſs, exerciſed and expreſſed, is the only object of true, pious gratitude, and therefore it is found no where but in a benevolent heart, or, which is the ſame, in thoſe who are friends to diſintereſted benevolence. The love of gratitude is eſſential to diſintereſted benevolence of a creature, as it is included in the very nature of it, as is the love of complacence, as has been ſhown. Wherever the benevolent mind ſees the exerciſe of benevolence by any being, he is not merely pleaſed with it, but exerciſes gratitude towards that Being, and that whether he himſelf be the object of that benevolence, or any other being in the univerſe. For the benevolent man is a friend to univerſal being, capable of good; he wiſhes well to *all:* therefore, he who regards the good of being in general, and promotes the general good, or expreſſes his benevolence by doing

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good to any particular being, is the proper object of grateful love, and such benevolence is suited to excite it, and certainly will do it in every benevolent heart. It hence appears, that as the truth in our text is suited to excite the love of benevolence and complacency to the highest degree, as has been shewn, it will also excite true gratitude; and that every thing contrary to this truth, is opposed to the pious love of gratitude.

When the benevolent mind sees Infinite Benevolence designing and effecting the greatest possible good to being in general, and promoting the greatest happiness of the whole, who "is good unto all, and his tender mercies are over all his works," and beholds him decreeing and doing, and causing to be done, every thing that is necessary to answer and effectually secure this end, this eternal purpose; he finds unbounded scope for the highest and most sweet gratitude to this Infinitely Good Being, who is glorifying himself to the highest degree, and producing the greatest possible happiness in the created universe forever. He gives thanks to God for his infinite goodness manifested in his works, and in his revealed design and fixed plan, including his own glory, and the highest good of the created universe. His mind is enraptured in gratitude to God for his regard and benevolence to the sum of all being, *Himself*, the first and the last, the Almighty, in that he has made all things for himself, for his own glory, and is unalterably determined, and infinitely engaged, to glorify himself by all his works, and by all creatures, and in conjunction with this to effect the greatest possible happiness of the creation. This manifestation of the divine holiness, and infinite benevolence, is the greatest, the supreme object of the gratitude and thankfulness of the pious, benevolent heart.

And when the pious, good man attends to the infinitely guilty and wretched state into which mankind have fallen, and how exceeding odious and vile they are, being total and obstinate enemies to God, his law and government, and violently opposed to all his benevolent

nevolent deſigns; and beholds God ſo loving the world as to give his only begotten Son to ſave them, that whoever believes on him ſhould not periſh, but have everlaſting life; and that a moſt glorious, happy and eternal kingdom ſhall be raiſed out of the ruins of an apoſtate world, to the glory of divine grace; and that the greateſt good ſhall be brought out of all the evil that has been, or will exiſt to all eternity, ſo that the iſſue ſhall be infinitely better than if there were no evil; and that this is all included in the eternal plan which was fixed by Infinite Wiſdom and Goodneſs; when all this comes into view, it will excite the moſt ſincere and ſtrong exerciſes of grateful love, which will continue and increaſe forever.

And when the pious man attends to the goodneſs of God to him, in particular, and is ſenſible that it is the effect of God's eternal counſel, and his benevolent deſign of good to him, and that it flows from him on whom he is abſolutely dependent, who orders all things, ſo that his hand is to be ſeen in every event that takes place; all this is peculiarly adapted to excite his grateful love, while he ſays, "Not unto me, but unto thy name, be all the praiſe and glory." And what a foundation is here laid for holy, increaſing gratitude forever!

Gratitude to God conſiſts in a true ſenſe and pleaſing approbation of the goodneſs of God to univerſal being, and to ourſelves, and in making all the acknowledgements and returns of which we are capable, in loving and giving ourſelves away to him, to be uſed for his ſervice, glory and praiſe forever.

The man who has no diſintereſted benevolence, but is wholly ſelfiſh, is not capable of the leaſt degree of this true gratitude. He can love thoſe who love him, but this is nothing but ſelf love, at bottom; for by the ſuppoſition, he ſeeks himſelf, and is devoted to none but himſelf in all his exerciſes, and is not pleaſed with benevolence for its own ſake, or any farther than he may reap ſome perſonal benefit by it, to gratify his ſelf love. He is diſpleaſed with that goodneſs which paſſes by him, and does good to others, or ſeeks and promotes the general good.

SERMON

# Sermon XVIII.

Eccl. iii. 14. *I know that whatſoever God doth, it ſhall be forever: nothing can be put to it, nor any thing taken from it; and God doth it, that men ſhould fear before him.*

THESE words have been explained in the foregoing diſcourſe, and the truths contained in them have been found to be the following: that God hath in his wiſdom and goodneſs, by his unchangeable decree, fore-ordained whatſoever comes to paſs; that this truth, conſidered in its extent and conſequences, is the only proper and ſufficient foundation of the true piety of men.

The laſt mentioned truth is now under conſideration, and has been in part illuſtrated and proved, by inſtancing in true love to God. We now proceed to conſider other branches of piety, which are included in love, and grow out of this root or ſtock, and may be conſidered as different modifications of this ſame LOVE; and to ſhow that GOD, viewed as deſcribed in the text, is the only proper object of them.

2. The *fear* of God is an exerciſe of piety. This is put in our text, and in many other places in holy writ, for the whole of true piety, as has been obſerved. The reaſon of this doubtleſs is, becauſe it is in a peculiar manner ſuited to expreſs the pious exerciſes of a fallen creature, infinitely vile and guilty, and juſtly expoſed to eternal deſtruction, into which he will infallibly fall, unleſs he be reſcued by ſovereign grace, who with humility and ſelf diffidence, knowing that he is wholly loſt in himſelf, truſts wholly in Chriſt, the only Saviour of ſinners, whom he has offended, and is conſtantly offending; yet truſts in him alone, even in his infinite power and ſovereign goodneſs, for pardon, righteouſneſs, holineſs, ſtrength and redemption. And thus it

is peculiarly adapted to expreſs the mode or manner of the pious, religious exerciſes of ſinners who believe in Chriſt, and are friends to God and the Redeemer; or the holineſs of repenting, believing ſinners, that is, real Chriſtians.

It is plain, at the firſt view, that the God who is repreſented in our text, in his abſolute independence, decrees and works, as it has been explained, is ſuited to lead men to *fear before him*, according to this general, comprehenſive ſenſe of fear, including the whole of piety; and that all thoſe doctrines which are oppoſed to this, have a contrary tendency, and are not conſiſtent with the fear of God, in this ſenſe of it. But it may perhaps give ſome farther light on this ſubject, by more particularly conſidering the fear of God in a more reſtrained ſenſe, and as a branch of true love or piety.

It is of importance to obſerve here, that *fear* is uſed in different and oppoſite ſenſes in the Bible; becauſe there are two ſorts of fear, one, that which implies holy love, and is eſſential to true piety; the other is oppoſed to love, and is therefore the fear of thoſe who are not friends to God, but enemies. This latter is intended by *fear*, in the following paſſages: 1 *John* iv. 18. "There is no *fear* in *love*, but perfect love caſteth out fear; becauſe fear hath torment: he that feareth, is not made perfect in love." 2 *Tim.* i. 7: "For God hath not given us the ſpirit of *fear*, but of power, and of *love*, and of a ſound mind." *Rom.* viii. 15: "For ye have not received the ſpirit of bondage again to *fear*, but ye have received the Spirit of adoption, whereby we cry, Abba, Father."

Theſe different kinds of fear may be in ſome meaſure illuſtrated by the following inſtance. An excellent father has a ſon and a ſervant, both of whom have been guilty of injuring him, and have fallen under his juſt diſpleaſure. The ſon heartily repents, and loves his father, and is reſtored to his favour. But he keeps conſtantly in view the evil which he juſtly deſerves, and which his father is able to inflict; he feels that he depends

pends entirely upon his father's goodneſs for an eſcape from that evil, and that he ſtands in need of his conſtant aid and aſſiſtance to preſerve him from offending again, and from that evil which he dreads ſo much. Both his father's diſpleaſure, and the evil conſequence, are dreadful to him. He knows his father is able to puniſh in the moſt dreadful manner; he ſees ſome of the family ſuffering the puniſhment every day, and others going in the way which will bring it upon them, unleſs they repent and reform in ſeaſon; and has feelings anſwerable to what he ſees. He knows he deſerves to be thus puniſhed as much as the worſt of them, and depends entirely upon his father's goodneſs to prevent it. He loves his father with all his heart, he approves of his conduct, and knows he does every thing right. He loves to have him ſupreme and independent in the family, and to have him order every thing, and to ſee his will done in all caſes; he loves to be abſolutely dependent upon him, and to have all the family ſo: and in the exerciſe of this love, and in the views now mentioned, he humbles himſelf before his father, and fears and trembles before him.

The ſervant who has offended his maſter, fears the rod, he dreads the puniſhment which is threatened, and knows he can inflict it; but he has no love to the father, his maſter; he wiſhes to be out of the family, and not dependent on him in any degree. He tries to pacify and pleaſe his maſter in his outward conduct, from the love of himſelf, becauſe he fears the rod, and wiſhes to eſcape puniſhment. Thus he lives in continual *ſlaviſh fear* of his maſter, which diſintereſted love to him would caſt out.

Every one muſt ſee the difference between the *filial fear* of the ſon, who loves his father, and the *ſervile fear* of the ſervant, who loves himſelf only; and the oppoſition of one to the other. And ſurely the difference and oppoſition between the *godly fear* of thoſe who love God with diſintereſted benevolence, and the ſervile fear of

of thoſe who do not love him, but are enemies to him, is much greater, and far more evident and ſtriking.

Here it may be obſerved, that this *ſervile fear*, by which men are reſtrained from a careleſs, bold practice of open ſin, and their attention to a future ſtate, and preſſing concern to eſcape hell and obtain ſalvation, is excited and kept up, this ſervile fear is neceſſarily awakened, and fills the ſoul with painful concern, when ſinners are convinced of the truth of the doctrine, in our text, and are made in ſome meaſure to *feel* it to be true. So long as God, in his greatneſs, omnipreſence and terrible majeſty, is not in their view, and they do not feel or ſee their abſolute dependence upon him for all good, and even to eſcape hell and obtain heaven, but feel as if they had their life in their own hands, in this reſpect, they will not be afraid of God, but live in eaſe and ſecurity. But when they come to feel that they are in the hands of God, and that he will deſtroy or ſave them, as he pleaſes, they being abſolutely dependent on him, they will begin to fear and ſtand in awe of him. And the more fully convinced they are of the truth contained in our text, the greater will be their fear and terror reſpecting their ſtate and ſituation. This every one can witneſs who has been an obſerver of others in theſe matters, or has attended to his own feelings. And it may be aſked, Where has any perſon been found, who has diſbelieved the doctrine of God's decrees, of his foreordaining *whatſoever comes to paſs*, who has been under any ſoul-diſtreſſing fear of God, or of eternal deſtruction?

But pious, godly fear implies love to God, in a view of his infinite greatneſs and importance, and a ſenſe of his infinitely beautiful and glorious character, unchangeably wiſe, good, upright, juſt, true and faithful, having decreed whatſoever comes to paſs, and executing his decrees in creating, preſerving and governing all his creatures and *all their actions*, for his own glory, and the greateſt good of the univerſe; or, which is the ſame, the greateſt happineſs and glory of his eternal kingdom.

And

And *this God*, who is the ſupreme object of love, is alſo the object of pious reverence and fear, as neceſſarily implied in true love. Thus pious love and fear imply and involve each other, and are really but one and the ſame affection, which this grand and glorious object is ſuited to excite. This fear of God implies a view and ſenſe of his greatneſs and unlimited power, of his unchangeable deſigns, and our abſolute and conſtant dependence on him, on his will, in every reſpect, for exiſtence and every motion, and all good, he being our potter, and we the clay in his hand, living, moving and moved, and having our being, *in him*. It alſo implies a view and ſenſe of our own infinite vileneſs and ill-deſert, and of the infinite evil which God is able to inflict, and may juſtly bring upon us; and that his almighty power and ſovereign grace alone can prevent our being deſtroyed forever, into which deſtruction many have fallen, and are falling continually; and that we depend wholly on him, even his ſovereign, forfeited mercy, to prevent our going to eternal ruin, and on his conſtant energy and grace, to cauſe us to cleave to him, and go in the way to heaven, we being nothing but inſufficiency and vanity, before the Infinite All-ſufficient Being; and in this view exerciſing ſelf-diffidence, humility, and truſt and dependence in God, dreading his diſpleaſure above all things, and ſubmiting to him, with a diſpoſition and deſire to obey him in all things forever. All this is implied in the true fear of God. But it may be expreſſed in fewer words, and perhaps more clearly to ſome minds, thus: To fear God is to be properly affected with his infinite greatneſs and terrible majeſty, threatening and puniſhing his implacable enemies with everlaſting deſtruction; to feel ourſelves and all the creation as nothing before him, and wholly dependent upon him; to be ſuitably affected with our own guilt and vileneſs, and our abſolute dependence on his ſovereign, undeſerved mercy for pardon, and the renovation of our minds to holy exerciſes.

The

The whole of this is expreſſed or implied in the following paſſages of ſcripture: *Luke* xii. 5:—"Fear him who, after he hath killed, hath power to caſt into hell; yea, I ſay unto you, fear him." All will grant that Chriſt here enjoins religious, pious fear of God, upon all who love him. And God is repreſented in his *terrible majeſty* as the object of this fear, they being wholly in his hands, and dependent upon him, who is able, and may juſtly, if he pleaſes, caſt them into hell, and make them miſerable forever. Upon this two things may be obſerved:

1. That it is here ſuppoſed that God does caſt ſome into hell, and inflict eternal evil upon them. For if this could not be done conſiſtent with his character and perfections, or with his known deſign, merely his having power to do that which it is known he never will do, and cannot do conſiſtent with his moral perfection, does not render him more an object of religious fear, than if he had no ſuch power; and it would be only an empty bugbear and ſcarecrow, ſet up to excite fear without any reaſon; which cannot be ſuppoſed. If no ſuch evil, as that of being caſt into hell, had exiſtence, or ever will be inflicted, in any inſtance, then it could not be reaſonably propoſed as an object of fear.

2. If this evil of being caſt into hell be a reality, God having power to do it, and actually doing it, whenever and in whatever inſtances he pleaſes, that is, when it is neceſſary for his glory, and the greateſt good of the whole; this repreſents God as an object of religious fear, to thoſe who feel themſelves in his hands, and deſerving of this evil; even when they conſider themſelves as ſecured from ſuffering it, by a divine promiſe through a Mediator. For ſtill eternal torment in hell is a reality, and they deſerve it as much as thoſe who are actually caſt into it; and are conſtantly dependent on God's ſovereign will, to be ſaved from it: and their eſcape from hell, and full, abſolute and unconditional ſecurity that they ſhall not periſh, cannot be ſaid to be perfect and completed, ſo long as they are on this ſide of heaven,

ven, in a ſtate of probation, and until they are actually admitted there. Beſides, while they, in the exerciſe of benevolence, behold their fellow Chriſtians by profeſſion, and their fellow men, among whom they live, and are uncertain that they will all eſcape hell, and ſee them in the hands of God, who caſts them into hell, or ſaves them from this infinitely dreadful evil, as he pleaſes, they muſt have a ſenſation and exerciſes independent of their own perſonal concerns, and however ſecure they may conſider themſelves, which is properly called the fear of the Lord, and of the glory of his majeſty. This is therefore enjoined upon all the people of God, as included in their pious obedience to him. [*Deut.* xxviii. 58 :] "If thou wilt not obſerve to do all the words of this law, that are written in this book, that thou mayeſt fear this glorious and fearful name, THE LORD, THY GOD, then the Lord will make thy plagues wonderful," &c.

And an affection of this ſame nature and kind will be exerciſed by the inhabitants of heaven forever, as neceſſarily included in love to God, in a view of his glorious, fearful, ſovereign power and majeſty, and of themſelves and all creatures, as being infinitely below him, and as nothing in compariſon with him, and wholly dependent upon him, for exiſtence, every motion of their hearts, and all good, and in a clear view of his terrible wrath againſt ſinners, and the dreadful puniſhment inflicted upon them. This is repreſented in the 15th chapter of the Revelation. John ſaw ſeven angels having the ſeven laſt plagues ; for in them is *filled up the wrath of God ;* and at the ſame time he obſerved the inhabitants of heaven looking on, ſinging and ſaying, "Great and marvellous are thy works, Lord, God Almighty, juſt and true are thy ways, thou King of ſaints. *Who ſhall not fear thee*, O Lord, and glorify thy name? For thou only art holy ; for thy judgments are made manifeſt." I proceed to mention another paſſage of ſcripture. [*Phil.* ii. 12, 13.] "Work out your own ſalvation *with fear and trembling ;* for it is God who worketh

worketh in you, both to will and to do, of his own good pleasure." Here fear and trembling must mean such exercises of mind as are suitable to their dependence on God and his operating energy, for all things, even every motion of their hearts, of will and choice; for this their dependence on God is given as a reason why they should go on in a Christian course *with fear and trembling:* FOR it is God who worketh in you both *to will* and to do of his good pleasure. They were hanging over hell, and must drop into it, unless supported and rescued by the omnipotent arm of God, working in them, and forming them both to will and to do that which was necessary in order to escape hell and obtain heaven; in which God was infinitely above all controul, and acted of his own good pleasure, after the counsel of his own will. Here the same idea is held up, and the same truth expressed, with that in our text, as the foundation and reason of man's *fearing before God*, and working out his salvation *with fear and trembling*, viz. Their absolute dependence on God in all things, even for every thought and motion of heart, which he effectually causes to exist by his invisible, secret, almighty energy, according to his own pleasure, which must be unchangeable, and according to his eternal purpose, including all he would do to eternity in producing every thing, and ordering every event: so that there is but one endless chain of events, made up of innumerable links, of which the least existence, event and motion, and every circumstance, the most minute, is a necessary part, as well as the greatest; the whole being formed by the wise counsel and will of God, and entirely dependent upon him, and executed by him; and which cannot admit the least possible change or alteration, it being as firmly established and fixed as the existence and throne of the Almighty.

I conclude this head with observing, that it is beyond all controversy certain, that the fear of God, as it has been explained, supposes *our dependence on him*, viewing him as what he is, and ourselves as what we are; and that,

that, the more abſolute, perfect and univerſal this dependence is, the greater foundation there is for this fear, and this affection will be ſtrong and conſtant in proportion to the view and ſenſe we have of this dependence. Therefore the doctrine contained in our text lays the beſt and moſt perfect foundation for the exerciſe of the fear of God, and is every way ſuited to promote it; and every opinion and ſentiment which contradicts this, and repreſents man as in any degree ſelf-ſufficient, and independent in any reſpect, is contrary to the true fear of God, and tends to prevent or deſtroy it.

3. An entire, unreſerved *truſt in God* is an exerciſe of true piety, and eſſential to it. The only foundation for this is his all-ſufficiency, his being unchangeable in his goodneſs, truth and faithfulneſs, and omnipotent, ſupreme, or doing every thing as he pleaſes, and guiding all things by his conſtant, univerſal agency, ſo as to anſwer the moſt wiſe and beſt end. Every thing contrary to ſuch a character is inconſiſtent with his being an object of unreſerved truſt and confidence to the pious mind. If God were not unchangeable in his attributes and deſigns, and had he not all creatures and things under his direction and controul; and could there be one motion or action in the univerſe independent of his direction, agency and will; and did he not know what is the beſt end, and what are the wiſeſt and beſt means to accompliſh it; and was he not unchangeably determined what he would do, in the exerciſe of infinite wiſdom and goodneſs; the benevolent, pious mind would have no foundation of unreſerved truſt and confidence.

But our God is not ſo. "He is *the Rock*, his work is perfect, for all his ways are judgment: a God of truth, and without iniquity, *juſt and right* is he." The pious mind, feeling his abſolute, entire dependence, and the univerſal dependence of all things, on this God, whom he loves with all his heart, puts his whole truſt in him, and relies upon him with the moſt unreſerved

 confidence,

confidence, and the greateſt ſatisfaction and pleaſure. "He beholds the hand of God conducting *all the hidden ſprings and movements of the univerſe*, and, *with a ſecret but unerring operation, directing every event*," * ſo as to promote and effect the greateſt poſſible good, his own glory and the greateſt happineſs of his kingdom, and of all who truſt in him; and with pleaſure places the greateſt and moſt unreſerved confidence in him, and caſts all his care upon him. "He *reſts* in the Lord, and waits patiently for him."

Thus the pious, benevolent man truſts in God to glorify himſelf by all things, and all events, that take place, however dark, and of a contrary tendency, they may appear to him to be. And he implicitly, without ſeeing how it may be done, relies upon Him to bring good, unſpeakable good, out of all evil; ſo that no event ſhall take place that ſhall not be beſt, on the whole, and all ſhall iſſue to the greateſt advantage to his ſervants, and his eternal kingdom. And he places his hope and truſt wholly in this God, for all he deſires and wants for himſelf perſonally, and for his fellow creatures, for body or ſoul, in time and to eternity: and the language of his heart is that of David, [*Pſal.* lxii. 5, &c.] "My ſoul, wait thou *only* upon God: for my expectation is from him. He *only* is my *Rock* and my ſalvation; he is my defence: I ſhall not be moved. In God is my ſalvation and my glory: the Rock of my ſtrength, and my refuge, is in God. Truſt in him at all times, ye people; pour out your heart before him. God is a refuge for us."

In ſhort, this doctrine, inculcated in our text, and taught through the whole Bible, being underſtandingly and cordially received, will pull down and deſtroy that ſelf-confidence and ſelf-dependence, which is natural to man, and with which ſelf love inſpires him; it is levelled directly againſt the ſelfiſhneſs and pride of man, and ſuited to caſt down every high thing in his heart, which exalts

* Dr. Blair's Sermons, vol. i. p. 46.

exalts itſelf againſt the knowledge of God; to exalt God, and humble man, and form him to cleave to God and the Redeemer, in a humble truſt and dependence on Him alone. No wonder then that this doctrine is ſo diſagreeable to thoſe whoſe ſelfiſhneſs and pride have never been ſubdued, and has been ſo much oppoſed in this ſinful world.

4. An entire, unconditional reſignation to the will of God, and pleaſing acquieſcence in it, is an eſſential part of true piety. In order to this, the will of God muſt be conſidered as unchangeably wiſe and good, and as wiſely ordering and guiding all events to anſwer a good end; and ordering all evil as the neceſſary occaſion and means of the greateſt good. God cannot be omnipotent, infinitely wiſe and good, unleſs he has foreordained whatſoever comes to paſs; and therefore on any other ſuppoſition there would be no foundation or reaſon for an implicit, unreſerved reſignation to his will. The pious, benevolent mind cannot acquieſce in any thing or event which is not wiſe and good; it cannot be reconciled to evil, conſidered in itſelf, only as evil; but in order to be pleaſed with its taking place, it muſt be conſidered in its connection with the good of which it is the occaſion. Therefore true reſignation to the will of God does ſuppoſe him to guide all the movements in the univerſe, and order all events in infinite wiſdom and goodneſs. In this view, and certain of this, the language of the pious, benevolent heart is, "Thy will be done;" without making any exception or condition. Whatever evil takes place reſpecting himſelf or others, he is ready to eſpouſe the language of pious Eli; "It is the Lord, let him do what ſeemeth good unto him." He with pleaſure exerciſeth an unreſerved ſubmiſſion and reſignation to the all-wiſe and infinitely good Being.

5. Repentance towards God, and humbling ourſelves in his ſight for our ſins, is included in the exerciſe of Chriſtian piety. This conſiſts in a ſenſe and acknowledgment of the evil of ſin, of its ill deſert, feeling ourſelves

ſelves wholly blameable and anſwerable for it, abhorring it, and condemning ourſelves for it, renouncing it, and turning from it; in which the ſinner juſtifies God, and approves of his law, and condemns and takes ſhame to himſelf. This always takes place and is exerciſed in the view of thoſe truths, which are at leaſt implied in the doctrine which we are conſidering. And it is impoſſible the heart ſhould repent while it oppoſes this doctrine, and thoſe truths which are contained in it. This can be done only by an impenitent, ſelfiſh, proud heart, which does always oppoſe and hate this doctrine, though the underſtanding and judgment may be convinced that it is true.

The doctrine of the decrees of God, foreordaining whatſoever comes to paſs, for his own glory and the greateſt general good, neceſſarily includes his hatred of ſin, and the evil and criminal nature of it, as it oppoſes the glory of God, and the general good; and the ſinner, who is guilty of it, does herein expreſs his enmity againſt God, and the good which is the object of his decrees: and were the natural tendency and conſequence of ſin to take place, without being counteracted, and overruled to anſwer an end which ſin and the ſinner oppoſe, God's end in his decrees would be fruſtrated, he would be diſhonoured, and good be deſtroyed by unlimited evil.

The ſinner is as blameable and criminal, as if his ſin was not overruled for good; for the nature of it is juſt as bad and unreaſonable as if no good came of it; and ſin is as great a crime as it would be, were there no divine decrees; and in ſome reſpects greater: for the ſinner acts as freely as he could were there no decrees; he has all the freedom that is in the nature of things poſſible; he acts voluntarily, and he oppoſes the wiſe, holy and benevolent decrees of God, and that infinitely wiſe, beautiful and benevolent plan which he has laid, and is executing, even in that very ſin and rebellion by which he is accompliſhing it. When the ſinner's eyes are opened to ſee all this, he ſees the evil of ſin, as it is oppoſed

oppoſed to this infinitely great and glorious God, to all his wiſe and benevolent purpoſes and decrees, and to that wiſe, glorious and all-comprehending plan of his operations. He ſees this, and adores, and his heart breaks and melts in contrition, and ſelf-condemnation, humbling himſelf in the ſight of this God. But the impenitent ſinner is irreconcilable, and at enmity with ſuch a God, and, in the pride and impiety of his heart, "replies againſt God," and ſays, "Why doth he yet find fault? For who hath reſiſted his will?"

6. Religious *joy* in God, and his government and kingdom, is a branch of true piety. This is inculcated abundantly in the holy ſcripture; and Chriſtians are commanded to "rejoice always in the Lord." And we have many examples of the religious joy of pious perſons. The fruit of the Spirit is *joy*. Believers rejoice with joy unſpeakable and full of glory; and this *joy* no man can take from them. This is the joy of the benevolent heart, in the exerciſe of that love to God, which has been deſcribed above, beholding him infinitely great and moſt bleſſed forever, having an uncontroulable dominion over all, decreeing and fixing from eternity every thing, and all events, in the wiſeſt and beſt manner, to promote and effect the moſt deſirable and important end, and the greateſt poſſible good of the whole. With this the benevolent mind is ſupported and pleaſed, in all the darkneſs, ſin and evil which take place in this world, and in the view of what will exiſt forever in the world to come, knowing that God has ordered it all, for the ſake of the good which he will bring out of it; that the wrath of man ſhall praiſe him; and the remainder of wrath, which would not anſwer this, or any good end, he will effectually reſtrain and prevent. In this view he has ſolid, laſting ſupport, comfort and joy, and ſays, "THE LORD REIGNETH, LET THE EARTH REJOICE. REJOICE IN THE LORD, YE RIGHTEOUS."

And as this truth, taken in the full latitude of it, is ſuited to ſupport, comfort and rejoice the heart of the pious

pious friends of God, in whatever ſituation they may be, and whatever may be the appearance of things around them; ſo it is the *only truth* which can ſupport them. If they give up or let go their hold of this ſtrong foundation and prop, they muſt ſink into gloom, ſorrow and deſpair. If they have no certainty that God cannot be diſappointed in his counſel and deſigns, and that he has fixed the beſt plan, including all events, which cannot be altered for the better; if they know not but things may take place, which are not on the whole beſt, but God might have been more glorified, and his people more happy, had they not come to paſs; and did they believe this to be the caſe; they muſt ſink into darkneſs, grief and ſorrow, which no conſideration could remove, but muſt abide on their minds forever.

And when they behold the ſin and univerſal apoſtacy of mankind, and the infinitely dreadful evils that are the attendants and conſequence of this, and know that this was not accidental, or aſide from the divine plan; but has been ordered and determined by God, that the way might be opened for Redemption by the Son of God, the moſt glorious work of God, by which he is glorified, the Redeemer exalted and honoured forever; and the redeemed made moſt happy in the eternal kingdom of God, in which they hope alſo to ſhare, and behold and love and ſerve and praiſe this God without end; their benevolent joy riſes ſtill higher. And the more they contemplate this divine contrivance and plan, with all its appendages, and diſcern the manifold wiſdom, and boundleſs goodneſs of it, the more does their joy increaſe, and they are ready to exclaim, with St. Paul, "O, the depth of the riches both of the wiſdom and knowledge of God! How unſearchable are his judgments, and his ways paſt finding out! For who hath known the mind of the Lord, or who hath been his counſellor? Or who hath firſt given to him? and it ſhall be recompenſed unto him again. *For of him, and through him, and to him, are all things;* to whom be glory forever, Amen."

The

The ſelfiſh man may have a great degree of religious joy; but it is entirely of a different nature and kind from the joy of the truly pious and benevolent, and there is no true piety in it; becauſe there is no true reſpect to God in it, no diſintereſted regard to his glory, and the public, general good, or the good of others. It is the joy of the hypocrite, of the falſe hearted man, who regards and ſeeks himſelf only, his own ſuppoſed private, perſonal good. If he thinks God loves him, and intends to make him happy forever, this gives him great joy, while his mind is contracted down to his little *ſelf*, and he has no diſintereſted pleaſure and joy, in beholding God, in his glorious character and unlimited dominion, and infinite, independent felicity, doing whatſoever he pleaſes, ordering all events for his own glory and the general good; nor is he willing to be ſo dependent on God, and ſo wholly indebted to him for all good, as is implied in his *forcordaining whatſoever comes to paſs*. "A brutiſh man knoweth not, neither doth a fool underſtand this." But the language of the pious friend of God is, "Thou, Lord, haſt made me *glad* through thy work: I will *triumph* in the works of thy hands. O Lord, how great are thy works! and thy thoughts are *very deep*. The counſel of the Lord ſtandeth forever, and the thoughts of his heart to all generations:" [*Pſal.* xcii. 4, 5, 6; xxxiii. 11.] "My ſoul ſhall make her boaſt in the Lord: *The humble* ſhall hear thereof, and be glad. O, magnify the Lord with me, and let us exalt his name together:" [*Pſal.* xxxiv. 2, 3.]

7. Devotion, which conſiſts in the worſhip of God, in Adoration, Confeſſion, Profeſſion, Self-dedication, Petition, Thankſgiving, and Praiſe, is a great and important branch of piety. I ſhall conſider each of theſe parts of devotion now mentioned, and ſhow that the doctrine which has been deduced from our text, and explained, is ſo far from being inconſiſtent with theſe, that it is ſuited to excite and promote them, and the only proper foundation of them.

ADORATION

ADORATION conſiſts in recollecting and attending to, and, with profound awe and religious fear, revering, the infinitely excellent and glorious perfections and character of the Moſt High God, manifeſted in his wonderful works, and moſt wiſe and univerſal government, in a ſolemn addreſs to him.

Now, no arguments are needed to prove, that a Being of infinite greatneſs, power, rectitude, wiſdom and goodneſs, who is above all controul, doing what he pleaſes, and ordering and directing every thing by his counſel and decree, with irreſiſtible energy, to anſwer the beſt end—that *ſuch a Being* is the only proper object of this adoration, and that the more clear conviction and greater impreſſion and ſenſe any one has of ſuch a Being and character, the ſtronger and more fervent will the exerciſes of his heart be in humble adoration; and this is the only object that is ſuited to continue and increaſe it forever. And the thought that God might be changeable in his deſigns, and had not decreed whatſoever comes to paſs, but that many things do take place contrary to his will, and ſo as to render his plan of operation leſs perfect than otherwiſe it would have been, muſt tend greatly to damp, if not wholly deſtroy, the moſt devout and rational adoration, and is inconſiſtent with the complete enjoyment and happineſs of the devout mind.

CONFESSION of ſin, unworthineſs, wretchedneſs, abſolute dependence on God and his ſovereign grace, &c. is eſſential to the devotion of a ſinner: a conviction and feeling ſenſe of all this is implied in all his pious exerciſes, and intermixed with them.

All this is implied in *repentance*, which has been conſidered; and it has been ſhown that the truth under conſideration is ſuited to promote this. The more clear view the ſinner has of the excellency of the divine character, of the abſolute, independent ſupremacy of God, of his infinite wiſdom, rectitude and goodneſs, and his entire dependence on the power and operation of God, the greater ſenſe he muſt have of his obligation to love and

and obey him; and consequently of his own guilt, vileness and ill desert as a sinner and rebel against this God; and feel himself utterly lost and undone: and therefore the more freely and fully will he confess all this. PROFESSION, SELF-DEDICATION to God, THANKSGIVING and PRAISE, in which the devout worshipper of God expresses before him his love to him, and all the friendly, pious feelings of his heart; devotes himself to God, willing to serve him, to be, do and suffer whatever God pleases and requires, and to be used by him to answer his wise purposes; acknowledging the goodness of God, admiring and praising him for what he is, and for what he does; all this is grounded on the infinite perfection and glory of the Deity, who is "over all God blessed forever," supreme, independent, "wonderful in counsel, and excellent in working;" whose energy guides every motion and event in the universe, according to the counsel of his own will. A being who is not supreme, not so powerful, wise and good, as necessarily to foreordain whatsoever comes to pass, could not be the proper object of these devout exercises of the pious heart.

# Sermon XIX.

The ſame Subject continued.

Eccl. iii. 14. *I know that whatſoever God doth, it ſhall be forever: nothing can be put to it, nor any thing taken from it; and God doth it, that men ſhould fear before him.*

IN the preceding diſcourſe the exerciſe of piety has been conſidered in a number of particulars. The laſt mentioned was devotion, and ſeveral things included in this have been conſidered. Another branch of devotion now requires our attention.

PETITION is that part of devotion in which we, in our addreſs to God, expreſs our deſires, or aſk him to do or grant that which to us appears good and deſirable. This requires a more particular conſideration, as ſome have thought it not conſiſtent with the doctrine of God's decrees, foreordaining whatſoever comes to paſs; becauſe, according to this, every thing is fixed, and cannot be altered. It has been ſaid, there cannot be any reaſon or motive to pray, or make any petition, to an *unchangeable God*, whoſe deſign cannot be altered, and who has fixed all events, without a poſſibility of any change.

Before any attempt is made to remove this objection, and ſuppoſed difficulty, it muſt be obſerved, that it equally lies againſt the *foreknowledge of God*. For if God certainly foreknows every thing that will take place, then every event is fixed and certain, otherwiſe it could not be foreknown. "Known unto God are all his works from the beginning of the world." He has determined, and paſſed an unchangeable decree, with reſpect to all that he will do to eternity. Upon the plan of the objection under conſideration, it may be aſked, What reaſon

reaſon or motive can any one have to aſk God to do any thing for him, or any one elſe, ſince he infallibly knows from the beginning what he will do, and therefore it is unalterably fixed? Therefore if it be reaſonable to pray to an *omniſcient* God, it is equally reaſonable to pray to an *unchangeable* God. For the former neceſſarily implies the latter. But in order to ſhow that the objection is without foundation, the following things muſt be obſerved.

1. If God were not omniſcient and unchangeable, and had not foreordained whatſoever comes to paſs, he would not be the proper object of worſhip, and there would be no foundation, reaſon or encouragement to make any petition to him.

This it is preſumed will be evident to any one who will well conſider the following obſervations.

*Firſt.* If there were no unchangeable, omniſcient Being, there would be no God, no proper object of worſhip. A being who is capable of change is neceſſarily imperfect, and may change from bad to worſe, and even ceaſe to exiſt, and therefore could not be truſted. If we could know that ſuch a being has exiſted, and that he was once wiſe and good and powerful, we could have no evidence that he would continue to be wiſe or good, or that he is ſo now, or that he is now diſpoſed to pay any regard to our petitions, or is either willing or able to grant them; or even that he has any exiſtence. What reaſon of encouragement then can there be to pray to a changeable being? Surely none at all. Therefore, if there be no reaſon to pray to an *unchangeable God*, there can be no reaſon to pray at all.

*Secondly.* If God be infinitely wiſe, and good, and omnipotent, ſupreme and independent; then he certainly is unchangeable, and has foreordained whatſoever comes to paſs. This has been proved above, or rather is ſelf-evident. But if he be not infinitely wiſe and good, &c. then he cannot be truſted; he cannot be the object of that truſt and confidence which is implied, and even expreſſed, in praying to him.

*Thirdly.*

*Thirdly.* The truly pious, benevolent, devout man would not desire, or even *dare*, to pray to God for any thing, if he were changeable, and disposed to alter his purpose and plan, in order to grant his petitions. Therefore he never does pray to any but an *unchangeable God*, whose counsel stands forever, and the thoughts of his heart to all generations. He is sensible that he is a very imperfect creature; that his heart, his will, is awfully depraved and sinful; that he knows not what is wisest and best to be done in any one instance; what is best for him, for mankind in general, for the world, or for the universe; what is most for the glory of God, and the greatest general good; and that it would be infinitely undesirable and dreadful to have his own will regarded so as to govern in determining what shall be done for him or any other being, or what shall take place. If it could be left to him to determine in the least instance, he would not dare to do it, but would refer it back to God, and say, "Not *my will*, but *thine*, be done." But he could not do this, unless he were *certain* that the will of God was unchangeably wise and good, and that he had decreed to do what was most for his own glory, and the greatest good of the whole; at the same time infallibly knowing what must take place, in every instance, in order to answer this end; and consequently must have fixed upon the most wise and best plan, foreordaining whatsoever comes to pass. Therefore, whatever be his petitions for himself, or for others, he offers them to God, and asks, *on this condition*, always either expressed or implied, *If it be agreeable to thy will:* for *otherwise* he would not have his petitions granted, if it were possible. And he who asks any thing of God, without making this condition, but sets up his own will, and desires to have it gratified, whether it be for the glory of God, and the greatest good of his kingdom, or not; and would, were it in his power, compel his Maker to grant his petition, and bow the will of God to his own will; he who prays to God with such a disposition, is an impious enemy to God, exercises no true devotion,

and

and cannot be heard; and it is desirable to all the friends of God that he should be rejected. Resignation to the will of God always supposes his will is unchangeably fixed and established, which it could not be, unless he has foreordained whatsoever comes to pass.

Thus it appears that if God were changeable, and had not foreordained whatsoever comes to pass, there would be no foundation for religious worship, or reason for praying to him; or that there can be no reason or encouragement for prayer and petition to any but an *unchangeable* God.—I proceed to observe,

2. There is good reason, and all desirable and possible encouragement, to pray to an unchangeable God, who has from eternity determined what he will do, in every instance, and has foreordained whatsoever comes to pass.

This will doubtless be evident, to him who will duly consider the following particulars.

*First.* Prayer is as proper, important and necessary, in order to obtain favour from an unchangeable God, as it could be were he changeable, and had not foreordained any thing.

Means are as necessary in order to obtain the end, as if nothing were fixed and certain. Though it was decreed that Paul and all the men in the ship should get safe to land, when they were in a storm at sea; yet this must be accomplished by means, and unless the sailors had assisted in managing the ship, this event could not take place, and they could not be saved. Prayer is a means of obtaining what God has determined to grant; for he has determined to give it in answer to prayer, and no other way. "Ask, and ye shall receive," says our Saviour. When God had promised to do many and great things for Israel, he adds, "Thus saith the Lord God, I will yet for this be inquired of by the house of Israel, to do it for them:" [*Ezek.* xxxvi. 37.] The granting the favours, which God had determined to bestow, was as much suspended on their asking for them, as if there had been nothing determined and fixed about it. There is as much regard had to prayer in granting

granting favours, and the prayer is heard, and God gives them, as really and as much in anſwer to it, as if there were nothing determined and foreordained reſpecting them: for the decree includes and fixes the means, as much as the end; the method and way by which events are to take place, as much as thoſe events themſelves. The one depends on the other, as much as if there were no decree, and nothing fixed; yea, much more: for the decree *fixes* the dependence and connection between the means and the end: whereas if there were no decree, and nothing fixed, there would be no eſtabliſhed connection, but all would be uncertain, and there would be no reaſon or encouragement to uſe means, or do any thing to obtain an end.

Surely, then, there is as much reaſon and encouragement to pray to an unchangeable God, and this is as important and neceſſary, as if there were nothing fixed by the divine decrees, and much more: yea, the unchangeable purpoſes of God are the neceſſary and only proper ground and reaſon of prayer.

*Secondly.* Though prayer is not deſigned to make any change in God, or alter his purpoſe, which is impoſſible; yet it is ſuited and deſigned to have an effect on the petitioner, and prepare him to receive that for which he prays. And this is a good reaſon why he ſhould pray. It tends to make the petitioner to feel more and more ſenſibly his wants, and thoſe of others for whom he prays, and the miſerable ſtate in which he and they are: for in prayer theſe are called up to view, and dwelt upon: and prayer tends to give a ſenſe of the worth and importance of the favours aſked. It is alſo ſuited to make perſons feel, more and more, their own helpleſſneſs, and entire dependence on God for the favours for which they petition, of which their praying is an acknowledgement: and therefore tends to enhance them in the eyes of the petitioner, when given in anſwer to prayer, and to make him more ſenſible of the free, ſovereign goodneſs of God in granting them.

them.* In ſum, this is ſuited to keep the exiſtence and character of God in view, and impreſs a ſenſe of religious truths in general on the mind, and to form the mind to univerſal obedience, and a conſcientious watchfulneſs and circumſpection, in all religious exerciſes.

*Thirdly.* It is reaſonable, and highly proper and important, and for the honour of God, that the friends of God ſhould expreſs and acknowledge their entire dependence on him, and truſt in him, for all they want for themſelves and others, and their belief in the power, wiſdom and goodneſs of God; and all this is acknowledged, expreſsly or implicitly, in prayer to God. It is alſo reaſonable and proper that they ſhould expreſs their *deſire* of thoſe things which are needed by themſelves or others, and which God alone can give or accompliſh: and ſuch deſires are expreſſed in the beſt way and manner by petitioning for them. And in aſking for bleſſings on others, and praying for their enemies, they expreſs their diſintereſted benevolence, which is an advantage to themſelves, and pleaſing to God, even though their petitions ſhould have no influence in procuring the favours which they aſk. And in praying that God would honour himſelf, and advance his own kingdom, and accompliſh all the great and glorious things which he

* A kind and wiſe father, who deſigns to give his child ſome particular favour, will bring the child to aſk for it before he beſtows it, and will ſuſpend the gift upon this condition, for the benefit of the child, that what he grants may be a real advantage to him, and a greater than if it were given before the child was better prepared to receive it, by earneſtly and humbly aſking for it; and that the father may hereby receive a proper acknowledgement from the child, and be treated in a becoming manner. And in this caſe, the petition of the child is as really regarded, heard and granted, and the child's application and prayer to the father is as much a means of obtaining the favour, and as proper, important and neceſſary, as if the father had not previouſly determined the whole affair. And when the children of ſuch a father know that this is his way of beſtowing favours on them, they will have as proper motives, and as much encouragement, to aſk for all they want, as if he had not determined what he would do antecedent to their aſking him; yea, much more.

he has promiſed to do for his own honour, and the good of his people, they do not expreſs any doubts of his fulfilling his promiſes, but are certain he will grant their petitions; but they hereby expreſs their acquieſcence in theſe things, and their earneſt deſire that they may be accompliſhed; and alſo profeſs and expreſs their love to God, and friendſhip to his people and kingdom; and do that which the feelings of a pious, benevolent heart will naturally, and even neceſſarily, prompt them to do.

We have many examples of ſuch petitions and prayers for thoſe things and events, which the petitioners, antecedent to their prayers, knew would certainly be accompliſhed. We have a deciſive and remarkable inſtance of this in David, the King of Iſrael, in the following words: "And now, O Lord God, the word that thou haſt ſpoken concerning thy ſervant, and concerning his houſe, eſtabliſh it forever, *and do as thou haſt ſaid.* And let thy name be magnified forever, ſaying, The Lord of hoſts is the God over Iſrael: and let the houſe of thy ſervant David be eſtabliſhed before thee. For thou, O Lord of Hoſts, God of Iſrael, haſt revealed to thy ſervant, ſaying, *I will build thee an houſe: therefore hath thy ſervant found in his heart to pray this prayer before thee.* And now, O Lord God, thou art that God, and thy words be true, and thou haſt promiſed this goodneſs unto thy ſervant. Therefore now let it pleaſe thee to bleſs the houſe of thy ſervant, that it may continue forever before thee; for thou, O Lord God, haſt ſpoken it, and with thy bleſſing let the houſe of thy ſervant be bleſſed forever:" [2 *Sam.* vii. 25—29.] Here David not only prays God to do that which at the ſame time he knew and acknowledges God had promiſed to do; and therefore it was eſtabliſhed as firm as the throne of the Almighty, and decreed that it ſhould take place; but he ſays that this promiſe of God, making it certain, was the reaſon, motive and encouragement to him to make this prayer: "Thou, O Lord, haſt revealed to thy ſervant, ſaying, I will build thee an houſe.

houſe. And now, O Lord God, thou art that God, *and thy words be true, and thou haſt promiſed this goodneſs unto thy ſervant;* THEREFORE HATH THY SERVANT FOUND IN HIS HEART TO PRAY THIS PRAYER BEFORE THEE." We hence are warranted to aſſert that it is reaſonable and proper to pray for that which God has promiſed; and that the certainty that it will be accompliſhed is a motive and encouragement to pray for it. How greatly then do they err who think that if every event is made certain by God's decree, there is no reaſon or encouragement to pray for any thing!

Our Saviour, in the pattern of prayer which he has dictated, directs men to pray that God would bring to paſs thoſe events which were already fixed and decreed, and therefore muſt infallibly take place: "Our Father, who art in heaven, *hallowed be thy name; thy kingdom come, thy will be done,*" &c.

Chriſt himſelf, in the 17th chapter of John, prays for thoſe whom the Father had given to him, that he would keep them through his own name, and that they might be *one*, as the Father and Son were one; might be kept from the evil in the world, and be ſanctified through the truth; that they might be with him in heaven forever, and behold his glory. At the ſame time he knew that all this was made certain to them; for he had before ſaid, that all that were given to him ſhould come to him, and he would raiſe them up at the laſt day; that he would give unto them eternal life, and not one of them ſhould periſh, as none ſhould be able to pluck them out of his hands, or his Father's. He prays, "Father, glorify thy name;" not becauſe this event was uncertain, but to expreſs his earneſt deſire of that which he knew was decreed, and could not but take place, and his willingneſs to give up every thing, even his own life, to promote this. Again, Chriſt prays in the following words: "And now, O Father, glorify thou me with thine own ſelf, with the glory which I had with thee before the world was." The event for which Chriſt prays in theſe words was decreed

from eternity, and the decree had been long before publiſhed, in the 2d and 110th Pſalms: "I will declare the decree: The Lord hath ſaid unto me, Thou art my Son, this day have I begotten thee. Aſk of me, and I will give thee the heathen for thine inheritance, and the uttermoſt parts of the earth for thy poſſeſſion. Sit thou at my right hand, until I make thine enemies thy footſtool." And he had declared the certainty of that for which he here prays, ſince his incarnation. He had ſaid, that all power in heaven and earth was given unto him; that "the Father had committed all judgment unto the Son; that all men ſhould honour the Son, even as they honour the Father. St. Paul, when ſpeaking of God, often introduces the following words: "To whom be glory forever, Amen;" which is not to be conſidered as a mere doxology, by which glory is *aſcribed* to God; but it is rather a *wiſh*, or *deſire*, that God may be glorified forever; and the *Amen* corroborates it: as if he had ſaid, "Let it be ſo; this is the moſt ardent deſire of my ſoul, including the ſum of all my petitions." Here then the Apoſtle utters a deſire and petition for that which he knew was decreed, and would take place.

The laſt words of Chriſt to his church are, "Surely I come quickly." Upon which promiſe the following petition of the church, and of every friend of his, is preſented to him: "Amen, even ſo come Lord Jeſus." Here is a petition, in which all Chriſtians join, praying Chriſt to do what he has promiſed; and which therefore was as certain as a declared decree could poſſibly make it: and the petition is grounded on this promiſe and decree publiſhed by Chriſt, in which the petitioners expreſs their hearty approbation of the coming of Chriſt, and earneſt deſire of this important and happy event. And if it be reaſonable thus to pray for an event which is fixed and made certain by an unchangeable decree, and cannot be altered, as in the inſtance before us; then it is reaſonable and proper to pray for any thing or any event which appears to us deſirable and important,

tant, though we know God is unchangeable, and that all things and every event are fixed by an unalterable decree.

The apoſtle John ſays, "And this is the confidence that we have in him, that if we aſk any thing *according to his will*, he heareth us. And if we know that he heareth us, whatſoever we aſk, we know that we have the petitions that we deſired of him:" [1 *John* v. 14, 15.] To aſk for any thing *according to his will*, is to aſk for thoſe things which it is agreeable to his will to grant; and this is to be known only by what he has revealed. When we aſk him to do what he has declared he will do, then we know we aſk for that which is according to his will; and conſequently, that we have our petitions. But it will be aſked, What are theſe things? I anſwer, That God will glorify himſelf in all things, and make the brighteſt diſplay of his perfections and character forever; that he will promote and effect the greateſt poſſible good of the univerſe; that he will make his church and kingdom perfectly happy and glorious forever; that he will accompliſh all his deſigns and predictions, and fulfil all his promiſes to his church and people; and cauſe all things to work for the good of thoſe who love him; and give his Holy Spirit to all who aſk him. Theſe, I think, muſt be the things we aſk, when we know that we pray for any thing *according to the will of God*, and conſequently know that he heareth us, and that we have the petitions that we deſired of him. But in all theſe inſtances we aſk for that which God has ſaid he will do, that is, has decreed that he will do them. And as it has been ſaid before, if a decree in theſe inſtances does not render it unreaſonable or improper to pray for their accompliſhment; then, if God has decreed *whatſoever comes to paſs*, this is not in the leaſt inconſiſtent with our praying for whatever appears to us deſirable and good, and may not be contrary to the will of God to grant. But here it muſt be obſerved, that when we aſk for any particular things or events which, though it may not be contrary to the will of God

God to grant, yet he has in no way revealed that it is his will to grant our petitions; when we aſk for any ſuch thing, we muſt do it with an expreſs or implicit reſerve—*If it be according to the will of God.* Otherwiſe, or if it be not according to his will, we muſt withdraw our petition, and not deſire to have it granted. Reſignation to the will of God, whatever it may be, in all ſuch inſtances, is eſſential to the pious petitions of a benevolent friend of God. And by thus referring to the will of God, and reſigning to that, deſiring it may be done in all caſes, whatever petitions we may make, we do refer to the decrees of God, by which he has determined what he will do in every particular inſtance; for his will and his decrees are in this caſe one and the ſame, being fixed and unchangeable.

*Fourthly.* It is not only proper and important that the worſhippers of God ſhould expreſs their deſires of thoſe things which they want, in praying for them; but were this not true, and were not aſking for them the means and way of obtaining them; yet the pious friends of God would eſteem it a privilege and enjoyment to be allowed and invited, "by prayer and ſupplication, with thankſgiving, to make known their requeſts unto him." To them prayer is not a *taſk*, from which they would be glad to be excuſed, but they practiſe it with pleaſure. They have great ſupport, enjoyment and happineſs in caſting their cares upon God, and expreſſing the deſires of their hearts to him. While others reſtrain prayer before God, and ſay, "What is the Almighty, that we ſhould ſerve him? and what profit ſhould we have if we pray unto him?" the benevolent friend of God would pray, were it only for the enjoyment which he has in the exerciſe; and ſays in his heart, "I will call upon God as long as I live." And though he is certain that God is unchangeable, and that nothing is done, or will come to paſs, which is not forordained by him, this does not tend to prevent or in the leaſt abate the pleaſure and enjoyment he has in making known his requeſts to God,

or

or his desire constantly to practise it: but this truth gives him support and consolation, and increases his delight in calling upon God, and renders it more desirable and pleasant unto him: yea, were not this a truth, he could not find any reason for making his requests known to him, or any delight in doing it; and would not have any encouragement, or even *dare*, to ask for any thing, as has been observed and shewn.

And now this matter is to be left to the judgment of every one who will attend to it. It is hoped that it appears evident, beyond all dispute, from the light in which this subject has been now set, that the doctrine of God's decreeing whatsoever comes to pass is not only consistent with all the exercises of true piety, but is the proper foundation for this, and is suited to excite and promote these exercises; and that there can be no real piety which is not consistent with this truth.

## IMPROVEMENT OF THE SUBJECT.

I. It appears from what has been said on this subject, that they who are in their hearts opposed to this doctrine of the decrees of God, are strangers to true piety, and do not fear before God. Though they may have exercises which they call and think to be piety and real religion, and it may have an *appearance* of it to others; yet it has nothing of the real nature of true piety, but is enmity and opposition to the true God. They may think they love God, and are speaking for him, and to his honour, and in favour of religion, while they are strenuously opposing this doctrine, as dishonourable to God, and destructive to all virtue and true religion: but they are deceived, and are really opposing and dishonouring the true God, and denying and renouncing that truth which is the only foundation of true piety.

This will, without doubt, be thought very *uncharitable* by many, as it condemns a great part of professing Christians, as destitute of true piety, and not real Christians. But is it the office of *charity* to give up the truth

truth becauſe it condemns ourſelves or our fellow men? Is it uncharitable to think and ſpeak according to the truth, and to cenſure thoſe who are cenſured by the God of truth? True charity, or love, "rejoiceth not in iniquity, but rejoiceth *in the truth*." If the ſubject we have been conſidering has been juſtly repreſented, and the truth eſtabliſhed by undeniable evidence; then this inference that has now been made follows with the greateſt certainty, and muſt be admitted, however many are cenſured and condemned by it, and be they who they may.

It is to be carefully obſerved, that the inference is, "Whoſoever *in their hearts*, and in the exerciſe of what they call piety, oppoſe this doctrine of God's foreordaining whatſoever comes to paſs, have no real real religion." Perſons may, through the prejudices of education, or ſome other way, be led to miſunderſtand this doctrine, and have very wrong conceptions of it, and imbibe prejudices againſt it, in their ſpeculations; and yet *the exerciſe of their hearts* be in ſome meaſure agreeable to it, in the practice of real piety. Their piety may not prevent or remove all their wrong and miſtaken ſpeculations and conceptions on this point. But if *their hearts* oppoſe this truth, which is the foundation of all true piety, their hearts are not right with God, but they muſt be enemies to him, and in the gall of bitterneſs, and bonds of iniquity, whatever ſpecious pretences they may make of love to God, and of devotion.

On the other hand, perſons may be right in their ſpeculations on this point, and be fully convinced of the truth of this doctrine, yea, be very zealous in arguing for it, and vindicating it againſt oppoſers; and yet never *heartily ſubmit* to it, but really oppoſe it in their hearts, and be wholly ſtrangers to every exerciſe of true piety.

On the whole, he who *cordially* ſubmits to this doctrine, and *has exerciſes of heart* anſwerable to it, is a pious man, and fears before God, whatever his ſpeculations may be. And he whoſe heart oppoſes this doctrine, in the whole tenor of his exerciſes, is a ſtranger to true

true piety, though he may be orthordox in his ſpeculative opinion. It is deſirable, however, that every man's judgment and ſpeculations ſhould be according to the truth: and it cannot be eaſily accounted for that a perſon whoſe heart is truly pious and benevolent ſhould continue to diſbelieve and reject this doctrine, when under all proper and deſirable advantages to get light and inſtruction, to have all his falſe conceptions of it removed, to know what it is, what is, and what is not, implied in it, and to learn the foundation and reaſon of it, and how expreſsly and abundantly, and in a variety of ways, it is taught and inculcated in the holy ſcriptures.

And if a perſon under all theſe advantages and inſtructions perſeveres in renouncing and oppoſing this doctrine, as very diſagreeable, and overthrowing all religion, with an obſtinacy and zeal which appear to proceed from the diſpoſition and feelings of the *heart*, we have reaſon to fear, yea, to determine, that the heart is not right with God, and that ſuch oppoſition flows from this root of bitterneſs.

That the unrenewed, ſelfiſh, impenitent man ſhould diſlike and oppoſe this doctrine, can be eaſily accounted for. For it appears from what has been ſaid on this ſubject, that it muſt be, of all things moſt diſagreeable to him, and that to which one of ſuch a diſpoſition and character can never ſubmit. But that he who is born of God, and has a humble, benevolent heart, and loves and fears God, and delights in the Bible, meditating therein day and night, is pleaſed to have God exalted, as a glorious, omnipotent, unchangeable, infinitely wiſe and good ſovereign of the univerſe, and to have proud man humbled and abaſed before him; that ſuch an one ſhould not believe that God has foreordained whatſoever comes to paſs, but oppoſe and be diſpleaſed with ſuch a doctrine, is quite unaccountable.

II. This ſubject teaches us the reaſon and importance of making the glory of God our ſupreme end in all we do.

1. Becauſe

1. Becauſe this is the higheſt, beſt and moſt important end that can be propoſed and purſued, and therefore moſt agreeable to wiſdom and benevolence.

2. Becauſe God himſelf makes this his end in all his works. This is aſſerted in the truth which is eſtabliſhed in the foregoing diſcourſe, viz. That God hath, *for his own glory*, foreordained whatſoever comes to paſs; and it has been ſhown that this muſt be the ſupreme end of the infinitely wiſe and benevolent Being, in all he does, and that this is neceſſarily included in the aſſertion in our text, "That whatſoever God doth, it ſhall be forever." It is certainly reaſonable that we ſhould purſue the ſame end that God does in his works, and herein imitate him, as his children. If it be wiſe and benevolent in God to lay a plan and purſue it to glorify himſelf, to make the brighteſt diſplay of his own perfections, wiſdom and benevolence will lead us to do all for the ſame end.

3. Becauſe the glory of God, the greateſt manifeſtation and diſplay of the divine character and perfections, includes the greateſt poſſible good of the created univerſe; for in producing and effecting this, the omnipotence, infinite wiſdom and goodneſs of God are acted out and manifeſted to the greateſt advantage, to be ſeen by creatures. The glory of God, and the greateſt happineſs of the creation, therefore, cannot be ſeparated, as two diſtinct and different ends, ſince the one neceſſarily implies and involves the other. The higheſt happineſs of a creature conſiſts in the knowledge and enjoyment of God, in beholding, loving and glorifying him; and therefore the more his perfections are manifeſted to the creation, the more happy will creatures be; and the greater the happineſs and glory of the creation is, the more is God glorified, the greater is the diſplay of his power, wiſdom and goodneſs. Does it not hence follow, that the glory of God implies all poſſible good, and therefore is to be ſought as the ſupreme end? How reaſonable and important then is it that we ſhould with zeal and fervour of mind conſtantly aim at this end, in obedience

obedience to the apoſtolic injunction, "Whether therefore ye eat or drink, or *whatſoever ye do*, do all to the glory of God!"

4. Becauſe he who makes the glory of God his ſupreme end, and conſequently ſeeks the greateſt good and happineſs of the creation, in the kingdom of God, is neceſſarily happy himſelf. His benevolence, by which he makes this grand object his ſupreme end, and places his happineſs in the glory of God, and the greateſt general good, will neceſſarily render him happy, in ſeeing this end completely accompliſhed, as it will be to the utmoſt of his wiſhes, and far beyond his preſent conceptions. He muſt neceſſarily ſhare in all this good, when it takes place; becauſe, by the ſuppoſition, this is his choſen good. And while he ſeeks this as the grand object of his deſire and happineſs, and is at the ſame time aſſured that it ſhall be accompliſhed, he has a great degree of enjoyment. He in a meaſure enjoys the good he ſeeks, in the aſſured proſpect that it will take place. Thus univerſal, diſintereſted benevolence, which ſeeks the glory of God, and the general good, is the only affection which can intereſt us in that good which will take place to the higheſt degree, and give us our full ſhare in it: whereas the contrary affection, *ſelf love* neceſſarily excludes from all true happineſs, becauſe the ſelfiſh perſon places not his happineſs in the glory of God, and the public good, the happineſs and glory of his kingdom; but in his own exaltation and private, perſonal good. He is, of courſe, an enemy to the only true good and happineſs, and ſo far as that takes place he is neceſſarily excluded and unhappy.

He therefore who, in this ſenſe, *denies himſelf*, gives up all that ſeparate, perſonal, private intereſt which ſelf love ſeeks, and, in this ſenſe, loſes his own life, ſhall find or ſave his life; that is, ſhall be truly and eternally happy, in the exerciſe of diſintereſted affection to God and the members of his kingdom, which neceſſarily puts him in poſſeſſion of the public good and happineſs, and gives him his ſhare in this *ſocial* felicity, as one of the mem-

bers of the ſociety. But he who *ſaves his life*, that is, who, having no public, diſintereſted affection, ſeeks himſelf only, and is purſuing and ſeeking to ſave to himſelf a ſeparate, private intereſt, for the ſake of which he is ready to ſacrifice and oppoſe the glory of God, and the general good—*he* ſhall loſe his life; that is, ſhall loſe or miſs of all happineſs, and muſt neceſſarily be miſerable.

*Thus* we ſee in what reſpects, and for what reaſons, it is our indiſpenſable duty, and of the higheſt importance to us, to make the glory of God our ſupreme end in all we do; and, by what has been obſerved, we may learn what is implied in this. It is to ſet this above every thing elſe; to aim at and purſue nothing but this, and what is implied in it; to ſubordinate every thing with which we are concerned to the glory of God; to give up and devote ourſelves, with all we have and are, to anſwer this end, without making any reſerve, freely renouncing all ſuppoſable or poſſible intereſt or good, for ourſelves or others, which is inconſiſtent with the glory of God, or which will not conduce to it and promote it.

III. They who deſire to know their own character, and the nature of their religious exerciſes, whether they bear the ſtamp of true piety, may examine and try themſelves by what has been exhibited on this ſubject: whether the God which is revealed in the Bible, unchangeable in his being, perfections, deſigns, decrees and works, is the choſen and delightful object of their religious affections; of their love, fear, hope and truſt; of their gratitude and joy; of their adoration and praiſe, to whom they make confeſſion, and pray with perſeverance and pleaſure; and whether they are conſcious that a God, who has not foreordained whatſoever comes to paſs, could not be the object of theſe their pious affections.

As to thoſe who diſlike and oppoſe this doctrine, and ſay, they cannot love and worſhip ſuch a God; and yet think themſelves truly pious, and in the way to heaven, and that they are ſerving and honouring God in their oppoſition

oppoſition to this doctrine; we will leave them to the day which ſhall try every man's work, of what ſort it is; at the ſame time being certain that if *their hearts* and all the exerciſes of them do oppoſe and reject the God who has forecordained whatſoever comes to paſs, and they live and die with *ſuch hearts*, they will be found to be *workers of iniquity*, and ranked with them who "know not God, and obey not the goſpel of our Lord Jeſus Chriſt."

IV. Let all who believe this doctrine be concerned to live anſwerable to it, and conſtantly *fear before this God*, and live in the exerciſe and practice of every branch of true godlineſs; and not, as many do, hold the truth in unrighteouſneſs, and pervert it to bad purpoſes.

The Chriſtian has learned to unite a conviction and ſenſe of entire dependence on God, who orders and works all things according to his unchangeable decree, for every motion and right exerciſe of heart, with zeal and activity in religion, working out his own ſalvation *with fear and trembling*, with ſelf-diffidence, and a ſenſe of his own inſufficiency for any good thing, and a humble dependence on God for grace to do his duty; becauſe he knows that God worketh in him both to will and to do, of his own good pleaſure: [*Phil.* ii. 12, 13.] And the ſtronger and more ſteady conviction he has that God overrules and orders all things for his own glory and the greateſt good of the whole, even all the ſin and rebellion of men, the more unreaſonable and criminal does ſin appear to him, as it is in its nature and tendency direct oppoſition to this event. And therefore the more does he loathe, abhor and condemn himſelf for his ſins, and acknowledge his deſert of eternal deſtruction: knowing that God's foreordaining whatſoever comes to paſs, leaves the ſinner as free a moral agent, and as inexcuſable and criminal, as if there were no decree in the caſe.

Bleſſed are they who underſtand theſe things, and know the only true God, who is wonderful in counſel, and excellent in working; and Jeſus Chriſt, whom he has ſent, who exerciſeth loving kindneſs, judgment and righteouſneſs in the earth.

SERMON

# Sermon XX.

WRITTEN IN THE YEAR 1800.

The ſins of men are ſo under the direction and controul of God, as to glorify him, and ſubſerve the good of his kingdom, in every inſtance of it which he ſuffers to take place.

Pſalm lxxvi. 10. *Surely the wrath of man ſhall praiſe thee: the remainder of wrath ſhalt thou reſtrain.*

IN this pſalm God's care and protection of his church is celebrated. In the midſt of all revolutions, wars and confuſions, which take place in the world, and the various and ſtrong combinations of wicked men againſt his people, they are ſafe and happy under his care, who will effectually reſtrain all their enemies, and finally utterly defeat and deſtroy them, and give deliverance, peace and ſalvation to his church.

In the words now to be conſidered, the abſolute and univerſal dominion of God over all creatures and things is aſſerted, ſo that he can and will turn all the oppoſition which is made to him and his government, however ſtrong and violent, and however long it may continue, to promote his own glory, and anſwer the beſt ends poſſible; and all the ſins which would not ſubſerve theſe good ends, he can and will effectually reſtrain, ſo that they ſhall not exiſt.

This very important and uſeful ſentiment will be illuſtrated and eſtabliſhed by a particular explanation of this paſſage of ſcripture, and the inferences to be made from it.

"SURELY the wrath of man ſhall praiſe thee." This is aſſerted not only as a truth, but as a moſt evident and certain truth, and of great importance to be believed

ed and relied upon with the greateſt confidence and aſſurance at all times, whatever ſeeming appearances there may be againſt it, and though we may not be able to ſee how it can poſſibly be true. This is expreſſed by the word *ſurely*, with which the ſentiment is introduced.

The wrath of man comprehends all the rebellion and ſins of men, that ever have or ever will take place, by which their hatred of God and his law and government, and ſtrong oppoſition to theſe, is expreſſed. Mankind, ever ſince they have multiplied on earth, have, in general, been in arms, at war with God, and with each other; and this war has in numerous inſtances been carried on with great apparent engagedneſs, wrath and fury, in ſome more directly againſt God, and in others immediately againſt each other. All this is comprehended in the wrath of man, in our text: and ſo are all the thoughts and exerciſes of heart and conduct, however private, and more or leſs apparent and ſtrong, which are contrary to the law of God; for all theſe are of the ſame nature and kind with thoſe ſinful actions in which men are more apparently, and with greater wrath and violence, combined againſt God and each other. And all the ſins of good men, whether committed before they were converted or after, are included in this expreſſion, as they are as really in oppoſition to God and his law, as the moſt open and avowed rebellion and rage againſt him, though not ſo ſtrong and viſible. Thus, all the ſins of which men are guilty, whether greater or leſs, more ſecret or open, under whatever form or pretence they are committed, are included in the wrath of man, as they are all rebellion againſt God, and a violation of his law, and oppoſition to his cauſe, church and kingdom; though the more open and violent oppoſition to the divine government, to the church and people of God, and to each other, may be more particularly intended by the expreſſion. This is evident and certain, not only as all the ſins of men are of the ſame nature and evil tendency, but they are all ſo united and combined, that if any inſtance and degree

degree of ſin is made to praiſe God, it muſt do ſo in every inſtance for the ſame reaſon; and if it were not ſo, the aſſertion in the words before us would be ſo partial as to be attended with great uncertainty, and of little uſe and importance in the application of it, as will appear in our further attention to the ſubject.

"The wrath of man *ſhall praiſe thee;*" that is, ſhall honour and glorify thee. The ſin of man ſhall, in every inſtance of it, be the occaſion and made the means of the manifeſtation and diſplay of the glorious character and perfections of God, which could not have been made to ſuch advantage and in ſo great a degree, in any other way, had not ſin exiſted in every inſtance in which it has done, or ever will do. This is not owing to the nature and tendency of ſin, conſidered in itſelf; for it tends to directly the contrary, to diſhonour him, and is a direct and awful oppoſition to the moral government, perfections and exiſtence of God; but to his power, wiſdom and goodneſs, by which he is able and diſpoſed to overrule all the rebellion againſt him, even every ſin which is committed, to anſwer his ends, and promote his own glory.

"The remainder of wrath ſhalt thou reſtrain:" that is, that wrath and thoſe ſins of men which are not ſuited and neceſſary to anſwer this end, to be ſo governed and overruled as to praiſe and glorify God, he will effectually reſtrain, and not ſuffer it to exiſt. This repreſents God as the ſupreme, ſovereign diſpoſer of all things and events, ordering what ſhall and what ſhall not exiſt, from the greateſt to the leaſt, and directing the will and actions of men in every motion and exertion, ſo that all depend upon his will whether they ſhall have an exiſtence or not; and this includes all the ſins of men, as really as any other event whatever. The counſel of God's own will determined whether there ſhould be any ſuch thing as ſin and rebellion, and how much of this ſhould exiſt, even juſt ſo much as ſhould praiſe him, and no more; which neceſſarily includes a determination concerning every inſtance or act of

of ſin, whether greater or leſs; as his determining that this earth ſhould exiſt includes a determination how large it ſhould be, of what materials it ſhould be compoſed, and concerning every part, and every grain of ſand, &c. of which it ſhould conſiſt. All this is neceſſarily implied in the words under conſideration. For in determining that ſin ſhould exiſt, and juſt ſo much as would praiſe him, and no more, there muſt be a determination concerning every act of ſin that ſhould take place.

The exiſtence of the wrath of man, the continuance of it, the height to which it ſhould riſe, and all the conſequences of it, depended as much upon the will of God, as did the exiſtence of man, and of a particular providence to be exerciſed with reſpect to him from the firſt to the laſt, containing the wiſeſt and beſt plan, by which God is moſt praiſed and glorified, and the greateſt good promoted. Theſe are ſo united and blended together, the one implying the other, that all muſt exiſt together, in order to form a perfectly wiſe plan, which ſhall be moſt to the glory of God, and the greateſt good of the univerſe. For when it is ſaid, the wrath of man ſhall praiſe God, it is equally aſſerted, that all the ſin which does or ever ſhall take place ſhall promote the greateſt glory and happineſs of his kingdom, and of all his friends, who ſhall dwell in it forever; for their glory and happineſs depend upon the glory of God, the manifeſtation and diſplay of his glorious perfections, and will keep pace with this forever, the former neceſſarily taking place and riſing in proportion to the greatneſs and increaſe of the latter, there being a neceſſary and infallible connection between them; ſo that whatever praiſes God, and ſerves to manifeſt and diſplay his character and glory, equally promotes the happineſs of all who are his friends, and the glory of his everlaſting kingdom.

Of all this there is the greateſt aſſurance and certainty, expreſſed by the Pſalmiſt in our text; but we have other ſtrong, corroborative evidence of theſe ſame truths,

truths, both from the ſcriptures and from reaſon, which demands our careful attention.

The ſcriptures will appear, beyond a poſſible doubt, to an attentive, honeſt mind, to be on the ſame plan, and to exhibit theſe ſame truths, from the beginning to the end. This is manifeſt in ſo many ways and inſtances that they cannot be all mentioned here. It will be ſufficient to ſuggeſt the following: "The ſcripture ſaith unto Pharaoh, Even for this ſame purpoſe have I raiſed thee up, that I might ſhew my power in thee, and that my name might be declared throughout all the earth." The wrath of Pharaoh was ordered and brought about by God in his providence on purpoſe that he might be praiſed and glorified; that his name, his character and perfections might hereby be declared thoughout all the earth. "What if God, willing to ſhew his wrath, and make his power known, endured with much long ſuffering the veſſels of wrath fitted to deſtruction? Here the ſin and deſtruction of thoſe who periſh is repreſented as ordered by God for his praiſe, to manifeſt his hatred of ſin, and his dreadful power in puniſhing ſinners who are finally impenitent.

The innumerable predictions in the ſcripture of events to be brought about, and which have been fulfilled by millions of millions of ſinful exerciſes and actions of wicked men, and predictions of many particular ſins which men ſhould commit, are an inconteſtible evidence that God has the direction of all the ſins of men, and that none can take place unleſs by his diſpoſal, ſo as to anſwer his ends, and promote his glory. Two or three inſtances may be mentioned to illuſtrate this remark.

The ſin of the brethren of Joſeph in ſelling him into Egypt, and all their anger and wrath which led to this, was determined and ordered by God for good, for his own praiſe and glory, and the good of his church. Therefore, God is ſaid to have done it, and to ſend Joſeph into Egypt, meaning it all for good. And in this way the wrath of Joſeph's miſtreſs in Egypt, and of her huſband, did praiſe God, and could not have taken

taken place, had it not been neceſſary to accompliſh the benevolent purpoſe of God; and they and the brethren of Joſeph were reſtrained from all that wrath and ſin, which would defeat the prediction by the two dreams of Joſeph, and not anſwer the purpoſe of God, and praiſe him. The former were reſtrained from putting Joſeph to death, as they once propoſed. And though Potiphar's "wrath was kindled," when he heard the falſe accuſation againſt Joſeph by his wicked wife, yet his wrath was ſo reſtrained that he did not take away his life, which had either of them done, the divine plan could not have been executed.

But the moſt remarkable inſtance of this is the ſin and wrath exerciſed by men in the treatment of the Saviour of the world, and putting him to death in the moſt cruel manner. This was all particularly determined and appointed long before by God, and foretold by the prophets. Hear what they who were inſpired ſay of this in their ſolemn addreſs to God: "Lord, thou art God, who haſt made heaven and earth and the ſea, and all that is in them; who by the mouth of thy ſervant David haſt ſaid, Why did the heathen rage, and the people imagine vain things? The kings of the earth ſtood up, and the rulers were gathered together, againſt the Lord and againſt his Chriſt. For of a truth, againſt thy holy child Jeſus, whom thou haſt anointed, both Herod and Pontius Pilate, with the Gentiles, and the people of Iſrael, were gathered together, to do whatſoever thy hand and thy counſel determined before to be done."

All this ſcene of ſin and wrath againſt Jeſus Chriſt was determined and directed by the hand and counſel, the power and wiſdom, of God, which was neceſſary for the greateſt diſplay of the divine perfections in the redemption of ſinful man, which has ever been made, and could not have been made in any other way, and will be to his praiſe and glory forever, and the means of the unſpeakably greater happineſs and glory of all his friends, the members of his eternal kingdom.

And all this ſin was ordered, to praiſe and glorify God, that he might hereby accompliſh his wiſe and infinitely important deſigns. Theſe ſinners were reſtrained, and prevented committing all thoſe ſinful acts which would not praiſe God, but, contrary to this, would counteract his wiſe purpoſes. Thus Herod was not able to put Chriſt to death in his infancy, when he attempted to do it. And the Jews were not allowed to lay their hands upon him and kill him, though they deſired and often attempted to do it, as this would not have been to the praiſe of God, but the contrary. They were reſtrained from effecting their purpoſe, till the proper time came, when this horrid deed would praiſe God, and was neceſſary to his accompliſhing the infinitely wiſe and important ends he had in view.

And indeed there is the greateſt certainty that the ſins of men, in general, and the univerſal depravity, rebellion and guilt of mankind, were neceſſary in order to there being ſuch a character as that of Jeſus Chriſt the Redeemer, and the wonderful, glorious events which do and will take place in conſequence of what he has done and ſuffered. For had there been no ſin, by which the human race are fallen into a ſtate of total ruin, there could not have been any Redeemer or redemption, by which God will be more praiſed and glorified than by all his other works. And indeed all his other works have reference to, and centre in, the glorious work of Redemption, and derive their chief glory from this, of which the ſin of man laid the foundation, which therefore is neceſſary for the greateſt and moſt bright diſplay of the perfections of God, and the conſequent praiſes from all his friends, and their happineſs in the enjoyment of him forever.

And as ſin in general, and the moſt remarkable inſtances of it recorded in ſcripture, ſome of which have been mentioned, are made to praiſe God, there is hence ground of aſſurance that it does ſo in every inſtance, and that this is true of every ſin that ever has been or will be committed by man, and that not one ſin which would not

not praiſe God will ever take place, had not this been expreſsly aſſerted in our text. And it is important to be obſerved, that all the natural evil which is the conſequence of ſin, which does or ever will exiſt, will anſwer this end, and is neceſſary for the brighteſt manifeſtation and diſplay of the divine perfections, and conſequently for the greateſt happineſs of all the friends of God. This is implied in the words of the apoſtle Paul, when he ſays, "We are unto God a ſweet ſavour of Chriſt, in them that are ſaved, and in them that periſh." According to this, the goſpel produces that which is pleaſing to God in the effect it has, not only in them who are ſaved, but alſo that which it has on thoſe who periſh. It is the occaſion of diſcovering the total depravity, and exceeding hardneſs, and ſtrength of the obſtinacy, of the human heart, in the univerſal, ſtrong and fixed diſpoſition to reject the offers of mercy, which no means will overcome and ſubdue; which diſcovery could not be made ſo fully in any other conceivable way. The clear and ſtriking manifeſtation of this will ſerve to diſplay the righteouſneſs and holy diſpleaſure of God in puniſhing ſinners with everlaſting deſtruction, and inflicting a greatly aggravated puniſhment on thoſe who periſh under the goſpel, as neglecters and deſpiſers of Chriſt and the great ſalvation.

The ſame ſentiment is expreſſed by this Apoſtle in the following words: "What if God willing [determining] to ſhew his wrath, and make his power known, endured with much long-ſuffering the veſſels of wrath, fitted to deſtruction; and that he might make known the riches of his glory on the veſſels of mercy, which he had afore prepared unto glory?" Here God is repreſented, not only as deſigning to ſhew his power, and his diſpleaſure with ſinners by fitting them for deſtruction; but alſo by this to make known the riches of his grace, in the ſalvation of the redeemed.

Thus it appears that there is the moſt clear and certain evidence from the holy ſcripture, that all the ſins of men that have or ever will take place, with all their circumſtances,

cumſtances, attendants and conſequences, ſhall praiſe God, ſhall ſerve to manifeſt and diſplay his perfections, as otherwiſe could not have been done, and ſhall be the occaſion of all that good, that glory and happineſs of his eternal kingdom, which is implied in this; that it is the will of God that all this ſin ſhould exiſt juſt as it does and will do, to anſwer this end, and no more; therefore all that ſin which would not praiſe him, he wills ſhall not exiſt, and effectually reſtrains.

And all this appears moſt reaſonable, and may be argued from the being and perfections of God revealed in the ſcriptures, in ſo ſhort and plain a way as to amount to a clear demonſtration, to the reaſon of every honeſt, unprejudiced perſon who will carefully attend to the ſubject.

God is omnipotent, and can do what he pleaſes. He is omniſcient; his knowledge extends to every thing. He is infinitely wiſe and good. He ſees what is the greateſt good on the whole, what is the wiſeſt and beſt end, and what are the moſt wiſe and beſt way and means to accompliſh it, and is diſpoſed, yea, has an infinite propenſity, to do it. It is therefore certain that all things and events abſolutely depended on his will from eternity, for their exiſtence, and the manner of it; therefore the plan of all future exiſtence, of all creatures and events, and the particular manner and circumſtances in which they ſhould exiſt, was in the Divine Mind from eternity. And as it muſt be the wiſeſt and beſt poſſible plan, containing all the poſſible good that Infinite Wiſdom and Goodneſs could deviſe and deſire, and Omnipotence execute, it cannot be altered in the moſt minute particular or circumſtance, to eternity. And if this were poſſible, it would be infinitely undeſirable and calamitous, yea, an infinite evil. It is matter of the greateſt joy that "the work of God is perfect," being decreed by him from eternity; that "whatſoever God doth, it ſhall be forever; nothing can be put to it, nor any thing taken from it;" that "the counſel of the Lord ſtandeth forever, and the thoughts of his heart to all

all generations;" that "he is of *one* mind, and none can turn or disappoint him," who "worketh all things after the counsel of his own wise, unchangeable will."

This leads directly to the point before us. It must be determined by God whether there should be any sin and rebellion under his government, and among mankind. This depended wholly on the will of God. He was able to forbid and prevent the existence of it; and if it was contrary to wisdom, perfect rectitude and goodness, that is, if he saw it was not wisest and best, and necessary to effect the greatest good, on the whole, that sin should exist, he could and certainly would prevent the existence of it. There is therefore the greatest possible certainty, from the divine perfections, that sin does exist just in the manner and in that degree, and in every instance of it, with all the attendants and consequences of it which do or will take place, agreeable to the dictates and will of Infinite Wisdom and Goodness, as being necessary to accomplish the most wise and best end, the greatest possible good of the universe; and the sin and misery which are not necessary to promote this end shall never exist, as it is contrary to infinite wisdom and goodness that it should. We may be as sure of this, as we are or can be of the being and perfections of God, or of any truth whatever, or even of our own existence. And to disbelieve and deny, or even to doubt of it, tends to atheism, and is really a degree of it.

To suppose that God has not power and skill enough to prevent the existence of sin, and was not able to withhold man from sinning, consistent with the perfect moral freedom of man, if he had chosen to do it, is to suppose he is really unable to govern the world agreeable to his will, and therefore is not to be trusted in a matter of infinite importance, and that he cannot be perfectly happy, but infinitely to the contrary, while he cannot prevent sin and misery taking place in a most awful, undesirable and even infinite degree, most contrary to what he would desire and wish, were he able to prevent it! And if God were not able thus

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to prevent the exiſtence of any of the ſins which have been committed by man ſince his creation, then he cannot be ſuppoſed to be able to prevent the exiſtence of any ſuppoſed degree of ſin in future in any moral agent; conſequently therefore there can be no ground of aſſurance, or the leaſt evidence, either from God, or from moral agents, or from any other quarter, that ſin will not take place in every moral agent, even in all thoſe who are now perfectly holy, and thoſe who are holy in ſome degree, in the greateſt ſtrength and to the utmoſt degree of which they are capable, and that as long as they ſhall exiſt! On this ſuppoſition, how could God know what would take place among his creatures? And how can he declare and promiſe that ſin ſhall be forever excluded from the holy angels and the redeemed from among men? What ſhall we do with the declarations and promiſes of this kind abundantly made in the Bible? Can there be any reliance upon them? And what reaſon has any one to truſt in God to preſerve him from ſin, and form him to holineſs, or to aſk him to do this? Dreadful and horrible and preſumptuous ſuppoſition! moſt unreaſonable, and big with conſequences moſt terrible and deſtructive! It leads to the excluſion of divine revelation, and cuts off all truſt and confidence in God in all matters of the greateſt importance, and excludes all belief of a particular and univerſal divine providence, and naturally leads to, and lands men in, the horrible darkneſs of infidelity and atheiſm!

But if God be able to prevent the exiſtence of ſin, and it was wiſeſt and beſt, on the whole, that there ſhould be no ſin, then wiſdom and goodneſs muſt oppoſe the exiſtence of it; ſo that to ſuppoſe that it is not beſt on the whole that ſin ſhould take place juſt as it does, is to ſuppoſe that God is neither wiſe nor good: for infinite wiſdom and goodneſs, clothed with omnipotence, always prefer and effect that which is moſt wiſe and beſt, moſt for the glory of God and the greateſt good of his eternal kingdom; and will certainly and effectually prevent the exiſtence of every thing which cannot

cannot be made to promote this end. To deny or even to entertain the leaſt doubt of this, and that all the ſin with its attendants and conſequences, which does or ever will exiſt, is neceſſary to effect the greateſt good of the univerſe, the brighteſt diſplay of the divine perfections, and the higheſt glory and happineſs of his kingdom, is equally to deny or doubt of the infinite wiſdom and goodneſs of God, and to repreſent him unworthy of the implicit truſt and confidence of his creatures, and ſo to leave them without any God, or one who is rather to be dreaded, than loved and adored. How diſhonourable to God this is, being as gloomy and ſhocking as atheiſm itſelf, every truly pious perſon cannot but diſcern and feel!

The holy ſcriptures, and our reaſon from the perfections of God, therefore join in declaring this truth, and oblige us to believe and ſay, "Surely the wrath of man ſhall praiſe God, and the remainder of wrath he ſhall reſtrain," in the ſenſe in which theſe words have been explained and vindicated, viz. that all the evil which has taken place, or ever will exiſt, both moral and natural, ſin and miſery, does take place, in every the leaſt and greateſt inſtance of it, under the ſuperintendency and direction of the infinitely wiſe and benevolent will of God, as neceſſary to promote the greateſt poſſible good of the univerſe, his own glory, and the higheſt happineſs of his moral, eternal kingdom. And he will reſtrain and prevent the exiſtence of all that which is not neceſſary to anſwer this end. *

This

* This truth has been and ſtill is greatly oppoſed, and many objections are made to it. It has been often and by many aſſerted, that if ſin anſwers ſo good an end, then ſin is a good thing, and the more there is of it the better; that this is the greateſt encouragement to ſin; and there is really no crime in ſin, if ſo much good comes by it, and therefore ſinners cannot be juſtly blamed and puniſhed for it. And it has been often ſaid by thoſe who think and profeſs themſelves to be wiſe, that this doctrine is inconſiſtent with human liberty, and really makes God the author of all the ſin that takes place. But the truth is great, and muſt and will prevail; and the folly of all theſe objectors, who underſtand neither what they ſay, nor whereof they affirm, ſhall be manifeſt unto all men.

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This is equally true of all the ſin and rebellion of the fallen angels, with all the attendants and conſequences of this. Their ſins are many ways connected with the ſins of men. They were the wicked inſtruments of introducing ſin among mankind, and are repreſented in the ſcriptures, as having a great hand in all the ſins which are committed by men, and deceiving and tempting the whole world of mankind. They are allowed to come down to the earth in great wrath againſt God and man, and to go forth to the whole world, to excite them to unite in horrible war againſt God. But they are in the hand of God, and under his reſtraints; and when they have done all the work he deſigns they ſhall do, he will caſt them into the bottomleſs pit, and ſhut them up, and ſet a ſeal upon them, that they ſhould deceive the nations no more, till the proper time ſhall come to let them looſe again. Thus the wrath of devils ſhall praiſe God, and the remainder of their wrath he ſhall reſtrain.

### IMPROVEMENT.

This ſubject affords matter of ſufficient ſupport, of great comfort and joy, to the true friends of God, in the midſt of all the evil, both ſin and miſery, which may take place. The Lord reigneth, clothed with omnipotence, infinitely wiſe and good, juſt and true. He is above all controul. He hath done, and will do, whatever he pleaſeth, in heaven and in the earth. He is infinitely above all poſſibility of any diſappointment, or of being oppoſed ſo as not to accompliſh all his deſigns in the beſt and moſt perfect manner. All the rebellion, ſin and ſuffering of creatures, that do or ever will

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It is needleſs to attempt to anſwer any of theſe objections here, as this has been publicly done over and over again. If any have a deſire to ſee them anſwered, they may find it done, in Preſident Edwards's Treatiſe on Freedom of Will, Dr. Weſt's Eſſay on Moral Agency, Dr. Edwards's Diſſertation concerning Liberty and Neceſſity, the author's Syſtem of Doctrines contained in Divine Revelation, and his Sermons on Rom. iii. 5, 6, 7, 8.

will, take place, are so far from frustrating his designs, that they are intended and ordered to take place just as they do, as necessary to make the greatest possible manifestation of his perfections, and promote the greatest good of his kingdom. There is not the least sin in thought, word or deed, nor the least instance of pain, nor can any evil exist, greater or less, which is not designed to answer some good end, so that it is best that it should exist just as it does. Then let the friends of God rejoice in him who made them and all things else, and orders every event, great and small, for the best. Let the children of Zion rejoice in their King: yea, let them *always* rejoice.

The Lord Jesus Christ, our God, who was once manifested in flesh, is received up into glory, has sat down on the throne of the universe, possessed of all power in heaven and earth, and having all things, angels, men and devils, in his hand, reigns over all, and will reign, till he has, in the best time and manner, completely accomplished his infinitely wise and good designs; destroyed the works of the devil, by wholly defeating, confounding and disappointing him and all who join with him, in all their attempts against him, and opposition to him, and turning all they have done or will do, and all that does or will take place respecting them, to answer his own ends, to the greater glory of God, and to make his work in the redemption of sinners more perfect and glorious. He having by his sufferings and obedience made an atonement for sin, and obtained righteousness for the justification of sinners, is thus exalted to give repentance and forgiveness of sins, and everlasting life to all who believe on his name, and come unto him; being able to save to the uttermost all them who come unto God by him. And as none of the human race will come to him, though all who hear the gospel are invited, unless they be drawn by the Spirit of God, and made willing by his power and grace, he in this exerciseth his sovereignty, and has mercy on whom he will have mercy, and whom he will he hardeneth.

And his will is infinitely wife, right and good. It is not beft that all mankind fhould be faved, moft for the glory of God, and the greateft good of the whole; but, that the defign of Chrift in dying to redeem finners may in the beft manner and higheft degree be anfwered, fome muft be given up to the deftruction which they deferve; and who is better able to determine this, and how many and what individuals fhall be faved, than He who is infinite in wifdom, rectitude and goodnefs, who cannot make any miftake, or do the leaft wrong to any creature? Yea, who can do it but He? Every one who has a fpark of true wifdom and goodnefs will earneftly defire that He may fix this matter with refpect to every individual; and rejoice that it is, and will be, done by Him. And who has a better, or any *right* to do this, than He who has made and is the abfolute and only proprietor of all creatures? "Hath not the potter power over the clay of the fame lump, to make one veffel unto honour and another unto difhonour?"

To every benevolent friend of Chrift the Saviour, it is moft defirable and pleafing that he fhould have all things in his hand, and fave as many and whom he will, and leave whom he will to deftruction. He has a peculiar right to this, fince he has been at fuch infinite expenfe to redeem finners, that he fhould accompliſh the end of his fufferings and death in the beft manner, and fee of the travail of his foul and be fatisfied, to have every thing effected with regard to the redemption of man fo as in the higheft degree to pleafe his wifdom and goodnefs. To this end he has every creature and thing in the univerfe put into his hands, and he directs every motion and event among creatures to anfwer the purpofe for which he died, which he will accompliſh in the beft manner, perfectly agreeable to infinite wifdom and goodnefs. He will fave all of the human race who can be faved conſiſtent with wifdom and infinite goodnefs. And to all who truft in him he is an almighty friend and protector, and will fecure them from all evil, and cauſe all things to work together for their good, and will

will make them perfectly holy, and carry them through death to heaven in the beſt manner and time, and they ſhall inherit all things forever.

In ſum, all things and every event are conſtantly under the direction and controul of infinite wiſdom, rectitude and goodneſs, and are conducted and going on in the beſt manner, as faſt as can be, to the moſt agreeable and happy iſſue poſſible, the greateſt, moſt bright and happifying exhibition of the divine character, and the higheſt glory and felicity of the everlaſting kingdom of God, from which no creature will be excluded, but thoſe whoſe preſence there is inconſiſtent with the glory of God, and the greateſt good of his kingdom, and therefore contrary to wiſdom and goodneſs, and who do at the ſame time exclude themſelves. Every thing, circumſtance and event is right; and all conſpire to promote the greateſt good, and, all things conſidered, it is on the whole beſt that they ſhould be juſt what they are, and take place exactly as they do. No alteration can poſſibly be made, without injuring and ſpoiling the divine plan, formed by infinite underſtanding, wiſdom and goodneſs. All this is to be ſeen with the greateſt certainty in the infinitely important and excellent character, works, and revealed deſigns, of the glorious Saviour of the world.

Surely no intelligent and truly benevolent perſon can believe and realize all this without feeling a peculiar pleaſure and joy, which will more than ſupport him under, and counterbalance, all the evil which he may feel, or that is in his view. He can, with peculiar ſatisfaction and joy, ſay, "Surely the wrath of man ſhall praiſe thee, and the remainder of wrath thou ſhalt reſtrain. The Lord Jeſus Chriſt reigns, let the earth rejoice. Rejoice always in the Lord, and again I ſay, rejoice evermore; for He brings the greateſt good out of all evil, and this ſhall certainly be the happy iſſue of all. He is the rock, his work is perfect; for all his ways are judgment; a God of truth, and without iniquity, juſt and right is He."

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Here it may be useful to attend to and answer several questions which may arise in the minds of some.

QUESTION. How can we have any joy or comfort in any or all of this, while we do not know, and have little or no evidence or hope, that we are interested in all this good, but fear that Christ does not intend to save us, and that we shall perish forever? If we knew we were Christians, and real friends to Christ, and should be saved, this would give us comfort and joy; but as we know not that this is true, and do often much doubt of it, what is all the good, which has been represented as the issue of all evil, to us, while we know not that we shall have any part in it; but may be cast off, and miserable forever?

ANSWER. If you are wholly selfish, and have no desire that God may be glorified, and the greatest good of his kingdom promoted, and can take no pleasure in the prospect and assurance of this, unless you are certain your own personal happiness will be secured and promoted hereby, then this discovers and decides your state and character, that you are not a real friend to Christ and his church, and no true Christian. All your hope and thoughts of this are a mere delusion, and ought to be immediately dismissed. You must be born again of the Holy Spirit, and become new creatures, before you can be Christians. But if you have any true benevolence, and are friends to Christ and his cause and interest, and the greatest happiness of his church and kingdom, you cannot but have comfort, pleasure and joy in the view and assurance that all things and every event, however evil and of a bad tendency in itself, will be overruled by him for his honour and the greatest good of his kingdom; that his interest is secure, and will be promoted by every thing that takes place, without considering your own personal interest, whether this is secure or not. And indeed you cannot know or have any ground to think or hope that you have an interest in Christ, and shall be saved, until you have this benevolent affection towards Christ and his people, and are conscious

conſcious that it does take place in your hearts in ſome degree, or thoſe exerciſes which imply this, or are implied in it. But when theſe exerciſes and benevolent affections take place in your hearts, and ariſe to ſuch ſtrength and conſtancy, that, when you reflect upon your own views and feelings, you are conſcious that you have them, that you are pleaſed and have enjoyment and comfort in the thought and aſſurance that Chriſt will get honour by all the ſins of men, and oppoſition made to him by men and devils, and the conſequent ruin of thoſe who periſh, and that all will iſſue in the greateſt poſſible good, on the whole, you will have reaſon to hope and conclude that you are friends to Chriſt, and ſhall partake in all the happineſs and glory of his eternal kingdom, and may, in this way arrive to a degree of aſſurance of it. And this is the only proper and ſafe way of obtaining a true and well grounded hope and confidence that you are real Chriſtians, and ſhall be ſaved. And as this hope increaſes and continues, your comfort and joy will be increaſed. But your comfort and joy does not ſo depend upon or conſiſt in this, that, if this confidence and hope ſhould give way to doubt and fear, all your comfort and joy would ceaſe; you could and would even then rejoice in the character, glory and happineſs of the Saviour, and that all things were conducted by him ſo as to anſwer the beſt end; that he would ſave all that can be ſaved conſiſtent with wiſdom and goodneſs, with his glory and the greateſt good of his church, whether you are included in that number or not: and if you find you can and do rejoice in this view, it is a good, perhaps the beſt evidence, that you belong to that number.

There are too many profeſſing Chriſtians whoſe religious comfort and joy appear to conſiſt wholly in a hope or confidence that they ſhall be ſaved; their comfort riſes in proportion to the degree and ſtrength of their hope, and when that ſinks and fails, and is even given up, their comfort is all gone, and all is darkneſs and gloom: ſo that all light and comfort with them in their

their religion conſiſts in thinking, or a hope, that their own perſonal intereſt is ſecure, and all their religious darkneſs and trouble ariſe from doubts of this. Their comfort firſt began in a hope and belief that they ſhould be ſaved, and ſtill depends wholly upon this. This does not look like the experience of true Chriſtians, but to be a wholly ſelfiſh religion, as different from real Chriſtian exerciſes, as darkneſs is from light.

QUESTION II. But muſt Chriſtians pay no regard to their own intereſt? May they not feel and dread perſonal pain and miſery? And may not their own ſins and ſufferings occaſion grief and ſorrow? And ought they not to feel for the ſins and calamities of others, and the ſinful, wretched ſtate of mankind in general, and mourn and lament, in the view of theſe evils? Muſt they always be all joy and gladneſs, and feel no mental pain and ſorrow?

ANSWER. A Chriſtian ought to regard his perſonal intereſt according to its comparative greatneſs and real worth; but muſt have no intereſt of his own, diſtinct and ſeparate from the general intereſt, or the higheſt and beſt intereſt of the whole univerſe. This is the intereſt to be regarded and ſought ſupremely, and the intereſt of every individual of this whole, according to the importance and worth of it; and as this muſt be ſmall and inconſiderable in compariſon with the grand intereſt of the whole, it muſt be diſregarded and given up, if it be inconſiſtent with the greateſt good of the whole. And he muſt and will have an averſion from and dread of perſonal pain and ſuffering, as it is in itſelf an evil; but this is conſiſtent with rejoicing at the ſame time in the happineſs of others, and in the greateſt general good, and he will have a peculiar ſatisfaction and joy when he believes and realizes that his pain and ſuffering will promote the good of the whole, which is in all inſtances true by the ſuperintending care of the Redeemer. Thus the apoſtles, when they were beaten and put to ſhame by the council of the Jews, "departed from

from the preſence of the council, rejoicing that they were counted worthy to ſuffer ſhame for his name."

And Chriſtians ought, and cannot but be affected with the ſin and miſery of mankind ſo far as it comes under their view, and to be pained and grieved, when they attend more particularly to it; for it is in itſelf a great, and to us incomprehenſible evil, and might well fill a benevolent man with inſupportable pain and ſorrow, and ſink him into the moſt diſtreſſing gloom and overwhelming grief, were he not certain that all this is under the direction and particular care and regulation of uncontroulable wiſdom and goodneſs, and has taken place becauſe it is neceſſary for the greateſt good, on the whole, and no more ſhall exiſt than ſhall anſwer this end, the glory of God and the greateſt poſſible happineſs of his kingdom; ſo that it is on the whole beſt there ſhould be juſt ſo much evil in the univerſe as there is and ever will be. But when he attends to this his ſorrow is in a great meaſure turned into joy. And could he have as clear and comprehenſive a view of the good that will be the iſſue of all the evil that takes place, as the inhabitants of heaven have, all his ſorrow would entirely ceaſe, and nothing would interrupt or abate his pleaſure and holy joy. But in this imperfect ſtate, where ſo much evil is felt, and preſent before our eyes, and the good which will be the conſequence of all this, though believed to be certain, is not ſo preſent and in ſo full and clear view as the evil, the latter, eſpecially at times, will occaſion pain and ſorrow. The good man, in this very imperfect ſtate eſpecially, cannot be equally attentive to every object at the ſame time, and when his attention is particularly turned to the evils that take place, and his mind is impreſſed with them, he will have pain and ſorrow, though he does not doubt that all things are ordered for the beſt, and that all the evil will iſſue in the greateſt good, while the latter is more out of ſight, or leſs the object of his attention, and conſequently makes a leſs impreſſion on his mind. At other times his attention is fixed on Chriſt, his character, works and

and deſigns, and the good he will bring out of all evil, his faith is ſtrong, and realizes inviſible things, that all things are going on well, and could not be better, as they are guided by infinite wiſdom and goodneſs. His pain and ſorrow are turned into comfort, joy and praiſe.

Thus the Chriſtian has his joys and ſorrows in this imperfect, ſinful ſtate: but the latter never takes place to that degree as wholly to exclude the former; but in the midſt of ſorrow he has joy, and, in a ſenſe and degree, rejoices *always*. So the apoſtle Paul "had great heavineſs and continual ſorrow in his heart," in a view of the ſin and miſery of his nation; yet in the midſt of his ſorrow he had matter of joy. Therefore he repreſents himſelf, "ſorrowful, yet always rejoicing." And he commands Chriſtians to rejoice in the Lord *always*, and repeats the injunction: "And again I ſay, *rejoice*. Rejoice *evermore*." And our glorious Saviour, when in a ſtate of humiliation on earth, did in his human nature rejoice in ſpirit, in the divine will, and ſovereign, wiſe diſpoſal of all things and events, reſpecting the children of men: [*Luke* x. 21, 22.] Yet he wept over Jeruſalem, when his mind was impreſſed with the ſin and ruin of the inhabitants of that city. And though he rejoiced and was glad that Lazarus was dead, as it was neceſſary for the glory of God and the good of his diſciples, yet when he ſaw Mary and her friends who were with her weeping, he groaned in ſpirit, was troubled, and wept.

QUESTION III. We believe a Chriſtian may have ſuch comfort and joy as has been deſcribed; but as ſome are doubtleſs deceived, and make great pretentions to this joy, who have only a falſe and ſpurious kind of joy, we ſhould be glad to know how, and by what, the former may be diſtinguiſhed from the latter?

ANSWER. This may be in ſome meaſure illuſtrated and decided by the following particulars:

1. The Chriſtian's joy is pure, calm and ſerene, and is better felt than expreſſed; therefore does not make him talkative, and forward to tell of *his* joy, unleſs when

when it appears neceſſary for the inſtruction and benefit of others; and then he is diſpoſed rather to ſpeak of the matter and reaſon there is of comfort and joy, than to dwell on his own comfort and enjoyment. He is humble, and has a low and mean opinion of himſelf, in proportion to the degree of his comfort and joy.

2. This joy does not tend to exclude or abate a ſenſe of the evil of ſin, and the ill-deſert of it, and of the miſery which takes place in conſequence of it: but, on the contrary, the Chriſtian has a clear view of his own ſinfulneſs, the hatefulneſs of it, and of his deſert of evil, when he rejoiceth in the Lord: his joy does not abate his ſenſe of this, but rather increaſes it. Nor is he inſenſible of the evil of ſin in general, and of the miſery that comes and will come on men for their ſins, while he rejoices that the wrath, even all the ſins and miſery, of man, ſhall praiſe God.

Therefore they whoſe religious joy ariſes from a belief that there is no great evil in ſin, and that God cannot juſtly, or if he could, will not, puniſh it with everlaſting deſtruction, have only a groundleſs and falſe joy.

3. This joy is ſo far from making perſons careleſs, ſlothful and inactive in religion, that it is attended with directly the contrary. They hate ſin, and endeavour to avoid it, and ſeek deliverance from it, and ſtrive to prevent and ſuppreſs it in others as far as they have opportunity and ability. They are fervent in ſpirit, ſerving the Lord. When they rejoice that he is praiſed, *they* ſeek to honor and praiſe him in all poſſible ways. Theſe cannot be ſeparated, as it would imply an expreſs contradiction. They not only praiſe God, but pray to him. Their comfort and joy is not inconſiſtent with engagedneſs and pleaſure in prayer; for the latter is implied in the former. They pray for deliverance from all that which appears to them to be evil, and for all things which they judge deſirable for themſelves and others, and which appear moſt for the glory of God, and the advancement of his intereſt and kingdom among men.

But, in all their desires and prayers, they are resigned to the will of God. They subordinate all to that, and say, *If it be consistent with thy will*—desiring that his will may be done, which they know is best, most wise and good, however contrary it may be to their partial views and particular desires. And in this resignation to the divine will, and acquiescence in it, there is implied an earnest desire and prayer. "Thy will be done," may be a strong and earnest petition, and always is so, when it is attended with a proper sense of the desirableness and importance that it should be done in all instances, as implying the greatest possible good, and with a disposition to rejoice in it.

It is therefore certain that they are strangers to the joy of true Christians, who, under a pretence of believing that all things and events are fixed by the will of God, and take place in the best manner, and that whatever is is right and best, are wholly careless and easy with regard to their own state and conduct, and whatever sins and evils take place; have no desires to cross any of their inclinations, and to be virtuous and holy, living in the neglect of fervent devotion, prayer and praise.

On the whole,

This subject is suited to excite Christians to attend to and improve the truth contained in the text which has been explained, so as constantly to enjoy the support and comfort which they need, and which is offered to them, in the present dark and seemingly evil state of things in this world. Were it not for *this truth*, there would be no support for Christians, but their minds would be involved in the most painful gloom, in the view of their own sinful state, and the sin and misery which abound in the world, directly tending to the dishonour of God, and the ruin of all that is desirable; attended with disorder and confusion, of which no bounds or end can be realized or known, or so much as conjectured. The good man would have no place on which he could set his foot, to prevent his sinking and being overwhelmed in darkness and despair.

But

But when the Chriſtian attends to *this truth*, and feels the certainty of it, his feet ſtand on a ſolid foundation, on a *rock* which cannot be moved: he feels calm, and has divine ſupport and comfort, in the midſt of the ſtorms and raging waves which toſs themſelves as if they would overwhelm the world. He looks above all theſe threatening appearances, and beholds a ſerene ſky, and knows the ſtorm will ſoon be over, and the daſhing waves will ceaſe, and the ſun will ſhine more bright and pleaſant than if there had been no ſtorm. The Chriſtian, whoſe mind is firmly eſtabliſhed in this everlaſting truth, and is ſure that all things will iſſue well, and that it is beſt they ſhould take place juſt as they do, that good will be the iſſue of all the evil, though he cannot but be affected with the evils, moral and natural, with which he is ſurrounded, and that more or leſs at different times, yet will have ſufficient ſupport, and be filled with comfort and joy, eſpecially at times, knowing that the Lord reigns, that the wrath of man ſhall praiſe him, and the remainder of wrath he will reſtrain.

It therefore becomes Chriſtians, as their duty and intereſt, to attend to this truth, taken in the whole extent of it, to keep it in their minds, and maintain a conſtant aſſurance of it, whatever appearances there may be to the contrary. It is to be feared that many Chriſtians are greatly deficient in this. They dwell too much, if not wholly, on the dark ſide of things, on the evils which are in their view, and ſuffer much gloom, dejection and pain of mind, for which there is no good reaſon, and which they might eſcape, if they looked more at the *bright ſide*, preſented in the truth which has been conſidered, and kept it always in view; and their tears of ſorrow would be in a meaſure dried up, and ſucceeded by tears of joy. It is obſervable that Chriſtians, when they meet with great diſappointments and calamities, either perſonal or public, in which the intereſt of the church and religion is concerned, are obliged to make uſe of this truth for their ſupport and comfort—

comfort—"The Lord reigns, and orders every thing right and well," &c. And if Chriſtians would keep this in conſtant view, and ſee and realize the hand of God in every event, they would have conſtant ſupport and comfort, and live more to the glory of God. And this tends to deſtroy all contracted, ſelfiſh views and feelings, and to enlarge their minds, while they attend to the divine character, government and kingdom, and the power, wiſdom and goodneſs by which all things in the univerſe are directed and governed. And the more they realize and are pleaſed with this, the more they reſemble the inhabitants of heaven, and are prepared to be members of that happy ſociety, and join with them in rejoicing and praiſing the only wiſe God their Saviour forever and ever. Amen.

## *ADVERTISEMENT.*

*THE Author hopes the candid reader will not be diſpleaſed with his ſpeaking ſo much in the firſt perſon ſingular in the following diſcourſe. Such* egotiſm *in general is diſagreeable to him; and he has therefore avoided it in his other diſcourſes, as the reader will perceive. But the following being of a peculiar kind, ſeemed to render it neceſſary; and it is hoped will not be thought ſelfiſh, aſſuming or improper.*

# Sermon XXI.

## The Author's Farewell to the World.

Pſalm lxxvi. 10. *Surely the wrath of man ſhall praiſe thee: the remainder of wrath ſhalt thou reſtrain.*

THESE words have been explained in the preceding diſcourſe, and it appears that they contain the following important truth:

That

That God, in his infinite wifdom and goodnefs, has determined that there fhould be juft fo much evil, both moral and natural, as has been, now is, and ever will be, and no more; as it is moft fuitable and neceffary to make the brighteft difplay of his perfections, and effect the greateft good, glory and happinefs of his eternal kingdom; therefore it is moft wife and beft that all this evil fhould exift: and every inftance of it, greater or lefs, God will overrule to anfwer this end, in the higheft poffible degree.

It has been fhewn that this truth, being believed and properly improved, is a fufficient and the only foundation for the fupport, comfort and joy of the benevolent friends of God, in all the darknefs, confufion, fin and mifery with which they are furrounded.

And now, ftanding on this fure, firm foundation, this immoveable, everlafting rock, I look round, and, as far as I am able, view the world of mankind, and take my leave of them, expecting foon to put off this my tabernacle.

I am old, having lived near fourfcore years, and I know not the day of my death; but have no reafon to think it is far diftant.

It is my earneft wifh to leave a bleffing behind me when I fhall go hence: and I have the confolation to know I fhall. Jefus Chrift is the fame, yefterday, to-day and forever. He lives and reigns head over all things to the church. He will reign till all his enemies are put under his feet; till he has deftroyed the works of the devil, and perfectly completed the work of redemption; yea, he will reign forever. He will caufe all the kingdoms of this world, in which Satan has reigned fo long, to become his own kingdom, and all nations fhall ferve him, and be holy and happy under his influence, protection and fmiles. Of this bleffed time the Bible is full of predictions and promifes. This bleffing I leave behind me for the world to enjoy long after I am dead; for I am fure that the time is coming when all the families and nations of the earth fhall be

*bleffed*

*bleſſed* in Jeſus Chriſt. The aſſurance of this affords ſupport and conſolation to me, while I am ſurveying mankind in their preſent ſinful and wretched ſtate.

It is doubtleſs impoſſible to make an exact calculation of the number of inhabitants now living in this world, which ſhall be agreeable to the truth, and may not err in fixing on millions leſs or more than do actually exiſt. But they who have attended to this point, and perhaps are beſt able to judge, have ſuppoſed that there are not leſs, but perhaps more, than *eight hundred millions* of people now living on earth: that of theſe, four hundred and eighty-one millions are Heathens; one hundred and forty millions are Mahometans; and nine millions are Jews. All which amount to ſix hundred and thirty millions. There remain one hundred and ſeventy millions, which are ſuppoſed to be nominal Chriſtians. Of theſe ninety millions are Papiſts, thirty millions of the Greek Church, and fifty millions Proteſtants.

It is not probable that this computation is exact, according to the truth, and ſome may make a different one; but this is perhaps as near the truth as any that can at preſent be made. I cannot ſpeak to all theſe, ſo as to be heard, and there is but a very ſmall number, compared with the whole, whom I ſhall ever know in this world, or who will know or hear of me. But I am ſure to meet not only all who are now in the world, but all the countleſs millions who ever have lived, or ſhall exiſt hereafter to the end of the world, at the day of judgment, when I ſhall know the character of every individual perſon, and mine will be inſpected and known by all.

The earth is far from being filled with inhabitants. There is room for many more, probably a thouſand, yea many thouſands, to one of the preſent inhabitants. The earth when properly and fully cultivated, and the produce prudently uſed to anſwer the ends of living, would ſupport a multitude of inhabitants, even beyond all our preſent calculation. Noah and his ſons, and

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in them every generation of mankind who have deſcended from them, received a command from God to multiply and *fill* the earth. This command has not yet been properly regarded by mankind; but, inſtead of this, they have in a great meaſure depopulated the earth, by wars and cruel ſlaughters of each other, and the practice of a variety of deſtructive vices, by which multitudes have been immaturely cut off in every age. And, by reaſon of the great corruption and horrid rebellion of mankind in every age, God has been pleaſed to ſhow his diſpleaſure by deſtroying the bigger half that have been born, in their infancy, or the early days of youth. But the time is coming when a generation ſhall riſe up who ſhall know and fear the Lord, and love their neighbour as themſelves, and ſhall learn war no more, and there ſhall be none to deſtroy or hurt in all the earth: and, in the practice of piety and every ſocial virtue, under the ſmiles of Heaven, they will be happy, and multiply and fill the earth.

According to the foregoing calculation, the greater part of mankind now on the earth are in a ſtate of Heatheniſm; and there are near as many Jews and Mahometans, as nominal Chriſtians, who are profeſſed enemies to Chriſtianity, and are in as bad, yea, worſe ſtate, than are the heathen.

It is the preceptive will of God our Saviour, that all men ſhould come to the knowledge of the truth and be ſaved. He commanded his diſciples to "go into all the world, and preach the goſpel to every creature." And every one to whom the goſpel is preached is commanded to repent and believe the ſaving truth. It is therefore wholly owing to the diſobedience and wickedneſs of man, both Chriſtians and Heathen, Mahometans and Jews, Infidels and Atheiſts, that the goſpel has not been preached to all mankind, and that they have not all embraced it, to the ſalvation of their ſouls.

Notwithſtanding man's natural diſpoſition to oppoſe, hate and reject the goſpel, and the many difficulties and dangers which hence ariſe, in attempts to ſpread the goſpel

goſpel among the Heathen and others, it is the duty of Chriſtians to exert themſelves, and take every proper method to propagate it far and wide, to the utmoſt of their power, looking to and truſting in Chriſt, to cauſe his word to run and be glorified. Love to Chriſt, and benevolence to men who are periſhing in darkneſs and ſin, are ſufficient, if properly exerciſed, to induce Chriſtians to unite in the proſecution of this moſt important affair. Chriſtians enjoy the richeſt treaſure by the goſpel, and they will not diminiſh but increaſe their own part in it by their attempts to impart it to others.

Within a few years paſt a great and extraordinary zeal and engagedneſs to propagate the goſpel among the Heathen, and others who have it not preached to them, has appeared, and been uncommonly exerted, both in Europe and America. And I obſerve with approbation and pleaſure, that all the ſocieties which have been formed are agreed in the great and leading doctrines of the goſpel, which have been called *the doctrines of grace*, or Calviniſm; and that they appear, in all their publications, to expreſs a ſpirit of true piety, and zeal to maintain and propagate theſe doctrines, and to approve of no miſſionaries who do not appear cordially to embrace them, and to be truly pious, as I am certain that this is the only ſcheme of doctrines which is conſiſtent with itſelf, and with the Bible, and ſuited to convey ſaving truths to the minds of men.

This is an important and commendable deſign and work, and worthy to be purſued with increaſing zeal and ſteady perſeverance by all Chriſtians, whatever difficulties, diſappointments and apparent diſcouragements may occur. And though the attempts ſhould not be ſucceeded in the converſion of one heathen, yet they who honeſtly, and from truly Chriſtian principles, engage in this cauſe, however much they riſk or expend, and even if they loſe their own lives in it, they will really loſe nothing by it, but meet with a rich reward. And if but few ſouls ſhall be gathered to Chriſt and be ſaved, this will more than compenſate for all the

the coſt and pains that can be beſtowed in the cauſe; for one ſoul is worth more than ten thouſand worlds. And though Iſrael be not now gathered, and there ſhall be no great and remarkable ſucceſs at preſent; yet they ſhall be acceptable in the eyes of the Lord, and it will, in ſome way, though now unknown to us, ſerve to promote and haſten on the happy day when the Heathen ſhall be given to Chriſt for his inheritance, and the uttermoſt parts of the earth for his poſſeſſion.

In this view I rejoice when I am taking my leave of the world, and heartily wiſh ſucceſs and God ſpeed to all who are, and the many more who hereafter ſhall be, engaged in this happy, glorious work.

Of nominal Chriſtians above two thirds are Papiſts, or of the Greek church, and near one third are Proteſtants, who are not more than the ſixteenth part of the inhabitants of the earth. The Popiſh church has corrupted the goſpel, introduced innumerable ſuperſtitious inſtitutions and practices, and an idolatry, in many reſpects more groſs and wicked than that of the Heathen. In ſcripture the head of this church, the Pope, is called Antichriſt and the Beaſt, who, with all his followers, who receive his mark, are doomed to deſtruction. The Greek church is ſunk into ignorance and ſuperſtition, and have departed from the eſſential truths and duties of Chriſtianity.* We are not therefore to look into either of theſe churches for many, if any, real Chriſtians. As public bodies, they will ceaſe to exiſt, when real Chriſtianity, in the truth and power of it, ſhall prevail through all the world. I therefore take my leave of them, as by the ſcripture doomed to deſtruction.

The Proteſtants, who began their ſeparation from the church of Rome in the ſixteenth century, when what is called the reformation from Popery took place, under the preaching and and writings of Luther and Calvin, and many other reformers, are now divided into various different ſects, parties and denominations, differing in the doctrines which they hold, and in their manner of diſcipline, and in the mode of adminiſtering

the ordinances of baptiſm and the Lord's ſupper, and the proper ſubjects of theſe ordinances, and in the mode of worſhip, &c. In the time of the reformation, and for ſome time after, the body of the reformed agreed in the moſt important and fundamental doctrines of the goſpel, which appears by their confeſſions of faith and catechiſms, which they publiſhed, and are the ſame, as to ſubſtance, with the doctrines which Calvin publiſhed in his Inſtitutions. The articles of faith of the church of England, formed not long after the reformation from Popery, are after the ſame model, Calviniſtic. About the middle of the ſeventeenth century, a confeſſion of faith and catechiſms were formed by an aſſembly of divines, called together from England and Scotland, by both houſes of the Engliſh parliament; which confeſſion and larger and ſmaller catechiſms were approved and ordered to be publiſhed by both houſes of ſaid parliament, and the parliament and general aſſembly of the church of Scotland. And they were ſubſcribed or aſſented to by all ranks of people in England, Scotland and Ireland. This confeſſion of faith, and theſe catechiſms, are what may be, and is generally, called *ſtrict Calviniſm*. And they have been aſſented to, taught and maintained by many to this day.

But doctrines contrary to thoſe contained in this confeſſion of faith were introduced among Proteſtants not long after the reformation from Popery, and were conſiderably ſpread, when the above ſaid confeſſion was formed; ſuch as are called Arminianiſm, and Antinomianiſm, and thoſe held by Arians and Socinians, who not only agree with Arminians in rejecting Calviniſm, or what are called *the doctrines of grace*, but deny the divinity of Jeſus Chriſt. Theſe doctrines have had a great increaſe and ſpread among Proteſtants, ſince that time, eſpecially in this century; and the prevalence of Deiſm, to which theſe doctrines have a direct lead, has taken place, and real, practical religion has decayed, and vice of almoſt every kind has increaſed and abound-

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ed in proportion to the propagation of theſe doctrines, which are oppoſed to Calviniſm, and have a tendency to ſpread infidelity.

About the middle of this century the attention of multitudes was rouſed, and there was a great and remarkable revival of religion, in Britain, Ireland and America, principally under the preaching of Whiteſield, and thoſe who joined with him. Great numbers were hopefully converted, and embraced the doctrines of Calviniſm. But there was too great a mixture of deluſion and falſe religion, which has continued and been ſpreading ſince that time, while the whole has been the mean of the increaſe of light and knowledge of the truth, by which true religion has been diſtinguiſhed from that which is falſe, and the important doctrines of the goſpel have been pointed out and vindicated, in oppoſition to the various errors which have been embraced by many, by the writings or preaching of thoſe who have appeared to have come to the knowledge of the truth. But by far the greater part, even the body of the people, appear not to have partook of the benefit of this revival of religion; and moſt who lived in the time of it were prejudiced againſt it, and oppoſers of it, and many of thoſe who at firſt appeared friendly to it apoſtatized, and either embraced errors and falſe religion, or abandoned themſelves to vice and infidelity; and on the whole it has been the mean of hardening men in ſin, and againſt the truth and all true religion, and againſt Chriſtianity itſelf; ſo that religion has been gradually decaying, in general, from that time to this, and the above mentioned errors, and Deiſm, and even Atheiſm, have been faſt ſpreading, and greedily embraced by multitudes, in oppoſition to all truth. And vice and immorality have kept pace with this, as the natural effect.

Deiſm and Atheiſm, which are near akind, as the former really implies the latter, and naturally runs into it, both being not only oppoſition to Chriſtianity, but to all religion, have for a century had a rapid ſpread in Germany,

Germany, and more or leſs in all parts of Europe. This has been promoted with uncommon zeal, and ſecret cunning, by a number of pretended philoſophers, who, with their abettors, have at length effected the public expulſion of Chriſtianity from France. And they do not ſtop here, but are determined, as ſoon as poſſible, to effect the extirpation of Chriſtianity and all religion from the Chriſtian world. Yea, they extend their views farther, and are attempting, as far as they ſhall have opportunity, to put an end to all religion of every kind, and all civil government, in every nation on earth, where there is any degree of theſe. They have extended their views to America, and have emiſſaries, both ſecret and more open, attempting to ſpread theſe pernicious principles; and there are multitudes, eſpecially of the riſing generation, who are prepared to receive them.

Though there have been of late ſome inſtances of apparent revival of religion, both by zealouſly embracing and promoting Calviniſm, or the true doctrines of the goſpel, and exhibiting the power and life of experimental religion in practice, both in Europe and America; yet the great body and maſs of the people are evidently faſt growing more and more corrupt in principle and practice. But very few of the whole are willing to make a profeſſion of religion, and by far the greater part of profeſſors do not underſtand or believe the important, eſſential doctrines of the goſpel, and are far from a ſteady, zealous conformity to the holy rules of it in practice, and ſhining as lights, in diſtinction from the world. Attending on public worſhip is more and more neglected and deſpiſed; and profanation of the ſabbath is more common, by irreligious viſits, vain companies, and walking or riding abroad in companies. Family religion is generally excluded; and family government and good order, and the religious inſtruction and education of children, is become very rare, and generally neglected; which gives a dark and melancholy proſpect reſpecting the religion and morals of the

the rising and future generations. And in proportion to the neglect of public worship, and the profanation of the sabbath, and the increase of profaneness and other vices, there is an increasing desire and engagedness to attend the foolish, wicked and corrupting diversions of the stage or theatre, and other sinful assemblies and amusements.

The present state of religion, both as to the doctrines and practice of those who profess to believe that Christianity is a divine institution, and of those who are professed infidels, affords a clear practical demonstration of what the Bible abundantly holds forth, viz. that true religion, in principle and practice, cannot be preserved and maintained in the world, but will soon vanish, be rejected and lost, if the powerful influences of the Spirit be withheld, and do not attend the preaching of the gospel, and the administration of the instituted ordinances of it, to the saving conversion of sinners, and the quickening, strengthening and comfort of believers. When men remain under the power of the natural corruption and ignorance of their minds, not being born of the Spirit, and taught of God so as to come to the knowledge of the truth, by the renewing of their minds, their carnal mind, which is enmity against God, will either lead them to reject the gospel wholly as a mere fable, and not worthy of credit, or to corrupt it in the doctrines and duties which it inculcates, so as to render it conformable to the corrupt inclinations of their own hearts. And this is no new discovery, but the evidence of it has existed and been increasing ever since Christianity has been published to the world, by the treatment it has received from all to whom it has been preached, except those who have known and acknowledged that they were brought to understand and embrace it by the invisible and powerful operations of the Spirit of God; that, were it not for this distinguishing, sovereign goodness of God, and they had been left to themselves, they should not have believed and embraced

embraced the goſpel, and diſcerned and loved the truths and duties there revealed, but ſhould have perſevered in ignorance and diſobedience.

This evident fact is a continual, ſtanding evidence of two things, viz. That Chriſtianity is a wiſe and holy inſtitution, and from heaven; and that mankind are totally depraved.

1. This is an evidence that Chriſtianity is from heaven, and a holy inſtitution; and that two ways. It is an evidence that it is from heaven, from its being continued and maintained in the world to this day, notwithſtanding the great and continual oppoſition of mankind to it, and their unwearied attempts to extirpate or corrupt it. Had not Jeſus Chriſt been from heaven, and was he not gone there to maintain his cauſe and church on earth, ſo that the gates of hell ſhould not prevail againſt it, agreeable to his promiſe, by the conſtant exertion of his power and inviſible influence, Chriſtianity and the church could not have lived to this time, but the great truths on which the true church of Chriſt is built would have been diſcarded and forgotten long ago. And it is an evidence that Chriſtianity and all the eſſential doctrines of it are from heaven, and that it is an holy inſtitution, that it is ſo diſagreeable and diſpleaſing to fallen, depraved men, by which they are diſpoſed to oppoſe and reject it, unleſs corrupted and altered ſo as to be agreeable to their taſte, and their reigning luſts. Had the goſpel been of men, a mere human contrivance, it would have been ſuited to the natural humour, taſte and inclinations of man, ſo that there would be no need of a ſupernatural change of heart in order to their cordial approbation of it, and compliance with the doctrines and precepts of it. But if it be from heaven, it muſt be a holy inſtitution, and therefore diſagreeable to fallen man. Were it ſuited to pleaſe the corrupt taſte and ſinful inclinations of man, it would be worſe than nothing, and could not be from heaven. But ſince the true doctrines and precepts of Chriſtianity are directly contrary to the heart and reigning

ing inclinations of fallen man, ſo that he muſt be born again and be a new creature, in order to his being a friend to the goſpel, or even underſtanding and believing it, it is certainly an excellent, holy inſtitution, and muſt be from heaven. Agreeable to this, Chriſt ſaid to the Jews, "I am come in my Father's name, and ye receive me not. If another ſhall come in his own name, him ye will receive." And Paul ſaid, "If I yet pleaſed men, I ſhould not be the ſervant of Chriſt."

2. This is an evidence of the total depravity of mankind; not only that they are fallen and depraved, but that they are *wholly depraved* in all their moral powers—have not the leaſt degree of right moral taſte and inclination, but are wholly under the power of the contrary. As the ſcripture ſays, "They are altogether become filthy; there is none that doth good, no not one." When a revelation comes from heaven perfectly wiſe, holy and good, and ſuited to relieve and ſave man from his fallen, wretched ſtate, revealing a Saviour infinitely excellent and glorious, full of grace and truth, and offering complete, eternal ſalvation to every one who is willing to have it; if man had the leaſt degree or ſpark of moral goodneſs or inclination; yea, if he were not wholly an enemy to God and every thing right and holy; he would not hate and reject ſuch an offer, but gladly embrace it. Mankind would not join together to invent ſome way to corrupt and ſpoil it, or root it out of the world, were they not total and ſtrong enemies to God and all that is wiſe and good, and conſequently enemies to their own good. "This is the condemnation" of man, as totally corrupt and an exceedingly criminal enemy to God, "that light is come into the world, and men have loved darkneſs rather than light, becauſe their deeds were evil."

But, to return to the view which has been given of the preſent ſtate of the world: It appears to me, as it alſo doth to ſome noted writers on the Revelation, that the ſixth vial, mentioned *Rev.* xvi. 12—16, is now running, and began to be poured out at the beginning of the

the eighteenth century, or ſome years before, and will continue to run ſome part of the nineteenth century, perhaps near fifty years of it. Under this vial John "ſaw three unclean ſpirits, like frogs, come out of the mouth of the dragon, and out of the mouth of the beaſt, and out of the mouth of the falſe prophet. For they are the ſpirits of devils, working miracles, [or wonders] which go forth unto the kings of the earth, and of the whole world, to gather them to the battle of the great day of God Almighty." Eight years ago I publiſhed a particular explanation of this paſſage in a Treatiſe on the Millennium. It is needleſs to repeat that. I ſhall only obſerve here, that this is a repreſentation of the uncommon ſpread and prevalence of error and wickedneſs of every kind over all the world, among all orders of men, eſpecially the Chriſtian world, under the influence of the devil, by which men in general will be in an unuſual degree combined, engaged and armed againſt the reigning God the Saviour, and ſhall produce great, ſtrange and wonderful events. And when the iniquity of the world is become full, and men in general are ripe for deſtruction, God will come forth out of his place to puniſh the world for their wickedneſs, in a moſt terrible battle againſt them, by pouring the moſt dreadful calamities and deſtruction upon them, under the ſeventh and laſt vial of the wrath of God, which is repreſented in this chapter, verſe 17th to the end, and in the xixth chapter, verſe 11th to the end. This will prepare the way for the introduction of the millennium, when the church of Chriſt ſhall increaſe and proſper, in an unexampled ſtate of purity and happineſs, for a thouſand years.

In the view of this preſent dark and evil ſtate of the world, and the proſpect of yet greater wickedneſs and more dreadful calamities which are to take place for ages and generations to come on the ſtage, I now take my leave of it, with a mixture of grief and joy; knowing that all this wrath of man ſhall praiſe God, and all the ſin and miſery that will take place is neceſſary for, and will

will iſſue in, the moſt glorious diſplay of the Divine Character, and the greateſt glory and happineſs of Chriſt and his church; and that he will haſten an end to theſe evils in this world as faſt and as ſoon as it can be done conſiſtent with his wiſdom and goodneſs, and ſo as to bring on the millennium in the beſt manner and time.

I think their notion is entirely without foundation, yea, contrary to ſcripture, who imagine that the end of the world may come, and Chriſt come to judgment immediately, at any day or hour now. Chriſt has foretold many things which muſt come to paſs between this time and that grand event. Nor, as they think, would the preaching of ſuch a doctrine tend to awaken people, and prevent their going on in ſecurity and ſin, more than what conſtantly takes place before the eyes of all, in the death of others, and reminding people that no one is ſecure from death one hour; that Chriſt may come when they think not, and carry them out of the world, which will be as fatal to them, if they are living in ſin, as if he had come to judgment.

Nor is their opinion founded on any reaſon or ſcripture, who think that but few of mankind, on the whole, will be ſaved. What our Saviour ſays of this reſpected the then preſent time. His words are in the preſent tenſe: "Few *are* ſaved." He does not ſay what will be in other ages of the world. He has foretold a time when all the kingdoms of the world ſhall be brought into his church and kingdom; and ſo many may exiſt in this time as to outnumber all that will be left.

Therefore while I am taking my leave of the world of mankind, who now lie in the wicked one, and are going on from bad to worſe, I may look beyond this evil time, and with pleaſure hail the incalculable millions of holy and happy ſons and daughters of Adam who ſhall yet ariſe and live on the earth, and be glad and rejoice in the glory of Chriſt and their ſalvation.

How many and which of the nations which are now Heathen or Mahometans, will be preſerved as a diſtinct people through all the revolutions and dreadful judg-

ments which are to take place preparatory to the millennium, and will be then, or before, converted; and ſhare in the bleſſings of that day, cannot be now determined. And this is true with regard to the various nations now in Chriſtendom. Some of them, and we know not how many, may become extinct, in the evil times that are coming, and the goſpel be carried to other nations, who do not now enjoy it. It is enough for us to know that every event and circumſtance, with reſpect to this, will be ordered in the wiſeſt and beſt manner by Chriſt, ſo as to accompliſh his purpoſe, to glorify himſelf, and effect the greateſt good of his church. As to the Jews, we know that mercy is in ſtore for them. They ſhall, more or leſs of them, be preſerved a diſtinct nation, through all the terrible ſhakings of the earth which are coming, down to the millennium, and have a large ſhare in the bleſſings of that day.

I take my leave of them, being now in a ſcattered, afflicted ſtate, under the power of an evil heart of unbelief, in the aſſured, joyful proſpect of the great good that is coming to them, when their reception into the church of Chriſt will be life from the dead, and the unſearchable depth of the riches both of the wiſdom, goodneſs and knowledge of Chriſt will be forever adored by all the redeemed. Oh, how ſhall all their paſt and preſent wrath, together with their future reconciliation, praiſe Him!

When I turn my attention to Chriſtendom, with pain and abhorrence I paſs over the beaſt, the Pope and his adherents, even all who receive the mark of this beaſt, as doomed to certain deſtruction: and I am without any aſſurance that thoſe who belong to the apoſtate Greek church will eſcape this dreadful evil.

But what ſhall I ſay of or to thoſe who are called Proteſtants? Great numbers who live among Proteſtants have profeſſed to diſbelieve and renounce Chriſtianity, and many have written againſt it, and attempt to prove that it is a mere fable, not worthy of the leaſt credit.

And

And though all they have written has been fully and often refuted, they perſiſt in their infidelity, and their number appears to be greatly increaſing, either openly or more ſecretly; while they are aſſiduouſly endeavouring to inſinuate their tenets by all poſſible means wherever they can have any influence, which they appear to have, eſpecially on the riſing generation; ſo that they will ſoon be greatly the majority, if they are not ſo now, unleſs Chriſt interpoſe by his irreſiſtible power.

I take my leave of all theſe, knowing that if they perſiſt in their unbelief, they will die in their ſins, and periſh in a greatly aggravated and everlaſting deſtruction. But at the ſame time I have the peace and comfort, which no man can take from me, in the aſſurance that, though they are infinitely worſe than loſt to themſelves, they are not loſt to Chriſt and his church. For this their infidelity, a peculiar kind of aggravated wrath, and all the conſequent evil which is coming upon them, will turn to the praiſe of the Redeemer forever, and he will be more honoured, and the redeemed more happy, than if ſuch infidels had not exiſted.

Still a more affecting and dreadful ſight, if poſſible, opens to my view. There is in the Proteſtant world, and among us, an innumerable hoſt of people, who, though they do not profeſs to diſbelieve the goſpel, yet do not obey it, but *live* in oppoſition to it, and in a conſtant, allowed diſobedience to Chriſt, and that not only by refuſing to do what he has commanded, but by greedily practiſing what he has forbidden. It would take many pages to enumerate half of the open vices which are practiſed by Proteſtants, notwithſtanding all the reſtraints of civil government. Theſe vices abound among thoſe in high ſtations, and in the low, rich and poor, learned and ignorant, old and young. From all theſe I take my ſorrowful departure, knowing that, unleſs they repent, the time is coming when Chriſt will ſay to them, "Depart from me, ye workers of iniquity. Depart, ye curſed, into everlaſting puniſhment." But in all this ſorrow, I am rejoicing, that Chriſt will cleanſe the

the world from this wickedneſs, and when the wicked are turned into hell, he will fill it with holy inhabitants, and he will be more glorified, and the church more happy, than could be if all this wickedneſs had not taken place.

Another numerous claſs of Proteſtants now come into view, who are too ignorant or erroneous to be ſaved. Many of theſe are included in the claſs laſt mentioned, but not all; for whether their lives be vicious, or what may be called moral, if they be ignorant of the goſpel and the truths of which it conſiſts, or if they do not believe theſe truths, but deny and reject them, they cannot be ſaved by it.

I am ſenſible that I am now expoſing myſelf to the indignation and contempt of an increaſing number, whoſe ſentiments on this head are what they call catholic and liberal. Theſe will ſay to me, What right have *you* to make a creed for us, or any other man, and inſiſt that all muſt believe and cordially embrace the doctrines you hold, in order to be ſaved? We believe it is of no great importance what a man's creed is, or whether he has any, if he be honeſt and ſincere in what he *does*, and worſhips God, and lives a good moral life.

To theſe I have to ſay, Ye are ſome of thoſe whom I mean to include in the above deſcription. You aſſert that the doctrines or truths revealed in the goſpel, if there be any, are of no importance, ſo that he who does not believe them, and whatever he believes, and he who is totally ignorant of the truth, may be ſaved, as well as if they underſtood and believed the truth. You are yourſelves totally ignorant of the goſpel, and appear to be real enemies to it; for if what you aſſert were true, the goſpel is worth nothing, and men may be ſaved without as well as by it.

He only who believes the goſpel, as preached by the inſpired apoſtles, can be ſaved. If we exclude the ſyſtem of truth contained in the goſpel, we exclude the goſpel; for it wholly conſiſts in a revelation of theſe truths. Some of them are theſe: That all mankind are ſinners, in

in a ſtate of total moral depravity by nature, in conſequence of the apoſtacy of their firſt parents, and under the curſe of the righteous law of God: that Jeſus Chriſt came into the world ſo ſave ſuch loſt ſinners, by making a full atonement for their ſins, by ſuffering in their ſtead, and meriting eternal life for them by his obedience, and power by the Holy Spirit to renew and ſanctify them: all which is infinitely too great for any mere creature to do; therefore he muſt be a Divine Perſon, really God with us, manifeſted in the human nature: that, in order to be ſaved, men muſt be renewed unto holineſs by the Spirit of God, in which he is the firſt mover, by regenerating them; of which none have any deſert or claim. Therefore he has mercy on whom he will, and whom he will he hardeneth; which naturally and even neceſſarily introduces the doctrine of the divine decrees with reſpect to man and his ſalvation, and conſequently reſpecting every thing elſe; and of election, and the certain perſeverance of believers to complete ſalvation: that men obtain pardon and juſtification by their union to Chriſt, by their believing on and truſting in him for this, and all they want, which they receive, not out of reſpect to any goodneſs, worth or deſert in themſelves, or any thing they do; that they are wholly dependent on God, for every degree of right diſpoſition and will to do what God requires, and not in the leaſt on themſelves; and this abſolute dependence on God extends to every thing in which they have any concern: that their ſalvation is therefore altogether, from beginning to end, the effect of undeſerved, free, ſovereign grace: that true holineſs conſiſts not at all in ſelfiſh affections, but in diſintereſted love to God and man: that they who do not believe this goſpel, and are not partakers of this holineſs, and perſevere in this way, will periſh in everlaſting deſtruction.

Theſe doctrines are all contained in the goſpel; and, with others not mentioned, which are implied in theſe, compoſe a ſyſtem of truth, which is really the goſpel, and is often in the ſcripture called THE TRUTH; to which

which Chriſt came to bear witneſs; which men muſt come to the knowledge of, in order to be ſaved; which all true Chriſtians are repreſented as cordially embracing and walking in, as the bond of their union and love to each other. They therefore who do not receive this *truth*, and love it, but in their hearts hate and oppoſe it, do not believe the goſpel, are not friends to it, and cannot be ſaved.

This is evidently true of the Arians and Socinians, who deny the divinity of Chriſt, and conſequently the need of any proper atonement for ſin, and oppoſe many other doctrines of the goſpel, in which they agree with thoſe called Arminians. Theſe latter deny the depravity of man by the ſin of Adam, or that he is totally depraved, and that they ſtand in any need to be regenerated by the irreſiſtible influence of the Spirit of God, in order to love God, and do thoſe good works by which they may pleaſe God and be ſaved. They are of conſequence enemies to the doctrine of the decrees of God, as they reſpect the agency of man, in the concerns of his ſalvation, as being, with the other doctrines which they deny, contrary to the natural ſelfiſhneſs, pride and imagined independence of man. There are others who hold a mixture of inconſiſtent doctrines, and do not profeſſedly join with Arminians, but evidently ſymbolize with them in many reſpects, and ſo as to exclude the pure, conſiſtent and eſſential doctrines of the goſpel.

Some there are who have been properly called Antinomians, who hold that Chriſt has ſo aboliſhed the moral law, that Chriſtians are not under obligation to obey it. And there are many others who are real Antinomians, who deny that any man can or ought to love the moral law, or God who made it, ſo long as he is under the curſe of this law, and conſiders himſelf ſo, and has no hope of being delivered from it: but he muſt have ſome diſcovery that God is merciful to ſinners, and that there is ſalvation for them by Chriſt, before he can love God or his law. And many, perhaps the moſt of this claſs, hold that no man can love God

or

or the Redeemer, until he ſees and believes, on good ground, that God loves him, and deſigns to ſave him; that Chriſt died for him in particular, and will ſave him. The love, and all the religion, for which all theſe plead, is altogether ſelfiſh, and has not a ſpark of real Chriſtianity in it, but is directly contrary to it. Jeſus Chriſt has declared it to be ſo: [*Matth.* v. 43, *to the end of the chapter.*] He ſays that the love to others which is grounded on their love to us is a ſelfiſh, wicked love, which men of the worſt character do exerciſe; that Chriſtian love is of a different and contrary nature, and ſo diſintereſted that it will extend to its worſt enemies.

There are many, who, though they do not expreſsly avow this ſelfiſh doctrine, by which all religion is bottomed on ſelf love, but diſcard it, yet deſcribe the religious views and exerciſes of Chriſtians as conſiſting very much or altogether in ſelfiſhneſs, and urge the choice and practice of religion wholly from ſelfiſh motives. And if it be urged that true religion will lead Chriſtians to thoſe diſintereſted affections, and that conduct, of which Chriſt has ſet us an example, they cannot underſtand, but rather oppoſe it.

There is another claſs of people called Univerſaliſts, who hold that all men will be finally ſaved. There has been for a few years paſt a conſiderable increaſe of thoſe who profeſs to embrace this ſentiment. Of theſe ſome are Arminians, others are Antinomians, and ſome enthuſiaſts. Few or none of them appear to underſtand and believe the pure, conſiſtent doctrines of the goſpel. They do not of late appear to increaſe who openly eſpouſe this doctrine, and yet adhere to the Bible; and moſt of theſe ſoon loſe their zeal in their cauſe. And their belief appears to have its natural effect on them, and leads them to live a careleſs, irreligious life; and numbers by degrees give up the Bible, and ſink into infidelity. There is reaſon to believe that there are many who do not profeſs to embrace this doctrine, to whom it is ſo pleaſing, that they wiſh and hope it to be true; and it has great influence upon them, and leads them to

a careleſs neglect of and concern about religion, and of ſtrict morality, and ſo hardens their hearts, that they are deaf to all admonitions, and will rather give up the Bible, and turn infidels, than admit that any will be miſerable forever.

All theſe, even thoſe whoſe outward conduct is not immoral, and who appear religious, who yet cordially embrace and are at heart pleaſed with the errors which have been now mentioned, and whoſe religious exerciſes are grounded upon and conformable to them, are ſtrangers to true religion, and in the way to deſtruction: and all theſe falſe doctrines and notions of religion, and all the practical religion that is built upon them, will be conſumed by Chriſt with the Spirit of his mouth, and deſtroyed with the brightneſs of his coming. Of theſe therefore I muſt now take my leave, without the leaſt diſpoſition to flatter them, or hope of their proſperity in the way they are going; and with a pleaſing certainty that all their errors and falſe religion ſhall be utterly aboliſhed by Chriſt, and that he will be praiſed and honoured by all theſe errors and this oppoſition to him, however wide may be their ſpread, and though they may continue yet a conſiderable time, even to the end determined.

I muſt now turn to the public profeſſors of religion, the members of the Chriſtian churches, of various different denominations, among Proteſtants.

The paſtors of churches, or the clergy of every degree and character, come firſt into view. It is doubtleſs true, that the clergy are the leaders and principal inſtruments in all the moral good and evil which takes place in Chriſtendom. All of the clergy in the Proteſtant world, who muſt be claſſed with thoſe before deſcribed, by the erroneous doctrines they hold, or not preaching any ſcheme of doctrines, but who really leave out all the eſſential truths of the goſpel, and confine themſelves to what may be called ſpurious heathen morality, and all of immoral lives, whatever doctrines they preach, are of courſe excluded from the number of truly

truly Chriſtian miniſters. Jeſus Chriſt has fixed their doom: "Many will ſay to me in that day, Lord, Lord, have we not propheſied in thy name? &c. And then will I profeſs unto them, I never knew you: Depart from me, ye that work iniquity." To theſe I cannot ſay, "God ſpeed," when I take my leave of them, leſt I be a partaker of their evil deeds.

But I muſt be allowed to ſift the clergy more cloſely; eſpecially thoſe of the United States of America, who are not excluded by the foregoing. A great body of miniſters in theſe States are profeſſed Calviniſts, differing however in ſome points, and are generally irreproachable in their moral conduct. But they are aſked ſeriouſly to conſider whether they have good evidence that they have been born again, agreeable to the ſcripture account of that great change, and find themſelves real friends to Chriſt and his cauſe, expreſſed in all proper ways.

It is to be feared that many not having ever paſſed this change is the reaſon why they bring forth no more good fruit, and ſo much which is more like bad than good; in that they do not appear to encourage experimental religion, or preach upon it clearly or much, if at any time. And though they would be thought to be Calviniſts, they appear to diſlike, and never preach, ſome of the moſt important doctrines of Calviniſm; ſuch as, the total depravity of man; God's firſt moving, and ſovereign grace, in the regeneration and converſion of ſinners; and the doctrine of the decrees of God, taken in the only proper, ſtrict and extenſive ſenſe; that he has decreed *whatſoever comes to paſs*. They ignorantly ſay, It would be better to ſay, God *foreknew* whatſoever comes to paſs. They chooſe to call themſelves *moderate Calviniſts*; but might as well, and perhaps more properly, be called *moderate Arminians*. But I ſhould be willing to lay all theſe names aſide, as many appear to wiſh, were it not the ſhorteſt and moſt convenient way to denote the general ſcheme of doctrines which different perſons embrace. This is agreeable to

the practice of the Chriſtian church in all the ages of it, whether more corrupt, or more pure. And no inconvenience has attended it, that I know of, which would not attend any other method. All of this claſs I muſt leave, with the fears concerning them, expreſſed above. And while I fall under their reſentment and cenſure, as narrow and bigoted in my ſentiments, and very cenſorious, I cheerfully leave the matter to the day when the Lord will bring to light the hidden things of darkneſs, and make manifeſt the counſels of the heart.

But I return to thoſe who embrace the doctrines of the reformation, of Calvin, and the chief and leading doctrines contained in the Weſtminſter confeſſion of faith, as being agreeable to the holy ſcriptures, and who give ſatisfactory evidence that they are the ſubjects of divine, regenerating grace, and are friends to Chriſt, and heartily engaged in his cauſe. I embrace you with cordial, benevolent affection, wiſhing you ſucceſs in your work, and that you may be faithful unto death. It is to be wiſhed you would give yourſelves wholly to the work of the miniſtry, and that you were all *ſtudents*, conſtantly labouring to make advances in the knowledge of divinity, by reading, meditation, and converſing with thoſe who are purſuing the ſame ſtudy of the ſcripture. We live in evil times, when Chriſtianity, and eſpecially true religion in principle and practice, is greatly oppoſed, and faſt decaying in general, as if it would ſoon all be gone; and we have reaſon to believe theſe evil times will grow much worſe. But this is ſo far from being a reaſon for ſitting ſtill and unactive, that it ought to be a motive to great and conſtant exertion to promote the cauſe of Chriſt, and oppoſe the flood of error and iniquity, which is coming in with a mighty, rapid ſtream. The cauſe of Chriſt will not be loſt. His truth is great, and will prevail. Good is to be done now, and ſome ſinners muſt be converted; and bleſſed is the man who has the greateſt hand in this work. We are commanded to pray to the Lord of the harveſt to ſend forth more labourers into his harveſt. And we have

have assurance that our prayers will be answered, in his own way and time. He will fill the church and the world with ministers, furnished with such abilities, fortitude, diligence, zeal, knowledge and true wisdom, as to exceed any of us, beyond, far beyond our present conception. In this view, I overlook the present dark scene, and take a cheerful farewell of you and of the world.

Having taken my leave of the clergy and pastors of churches among Protestants, I must not pass over the private members of these churches, in very different worldly circumstances and stations, and of various denominations. When all of this class, who are either ignorant of the essential doctrines of the gospel, or deny and oppose them, and imbibe contrary errors, as most agreeable to their hearts; and all those who take the name of Christians, but do not depart from iniquity, and lead vicious lives; also all mere formal professors, who do not live up to their profession, and bring forth good fruit, but in their general conversation and conduct mix with the men of the world, and live more conformable to them than like real Christians; finally, all those who appear strangers to experimental religion, or any thing like being born again; when all these are excluded and set aside, as not the proper objects of Christian charity, how comparatively small will be the number of the remnant who are left! And yet it is probable that among these, some, if not many, are, under a fair appearance, but mere hypocrites! The happy number of true Christians cannot be certainly known by any man, and some of them are not known by themselves to be real Christians; but the Lord knows who are his, and will own and take care of them.

They are all united in believing and loving the truth as it is in Jesus, and have all drank into the same Spirit, under whatever form they worship, and whatever denomination they have taken. The distinctions by which the various denominations of Christians are now divided will doubtless vanish, when a greater degree of holiness

holineſs and light ſhall take place, and prejudices by education or any other means ſhall be removed; and Chriſtians will be united and of one mind in thoſe things about which they are now divided, and their creed, in which they agree, as to ſubſtance, now, will remain the great bond of union. They who underſtand and believe that the wrath of man ſhall praiſe God, and that the remainder of wrath he will reſtrain, as all true Chriſtians do, muſt, to be conſiſtent, believe the doctrines preached and written by that great reformer JOHN CALVIN, and conſequently the above mentioned confeſſion of faith, in the ſubſtance of it; and therefore muſt be agreed in the chief articles of their creed; for all this is really contained in this paſſage of ſcripture; of which every unprejudiced, candid perſon muſt be convinced, if he will carefully attend to the words, and to the explanation that has been given of them.

To you I addreſs myſelf with peculiar pleaſure. You live in a time pointed out in ſcripture prophecy as peculiarly evil; and preſent evils, which have lately increaſed, both moral and natural, doubtleſs will yet make a rapid progreſs, till they ſhall riſe to a height which is beyond your preſent conception; and you have no reaſon to expect to live to ſee the end of them. Yet theſe words of the text, and the abundant promiſes made to the church, and to every true believer, are a ſufficient ground of conſtant ſupport and conſolation to all real Chriſtians. It is a ground of ſupport and comfort to reflect and know that but a ſmall part of the whole time of the trouble of the church yet remains to fill up the meaſure of her ſuffering, though the laſt conflict may be moſt ſevere. I believe we have not yet attained any light from ſcripture, from which we can be ſure that Chriſtians will not ſuffer perſecution, and that a more trying and ſevere one than any that has yet taken place, before the millennium comes on. But this will not be, unleſs it be neceſſary for the good of the church, and to introduce the time of her proſperity in the beſt manner; and all this wrath of man, be it more

more or leſs, of longer or ſhorter duration, ſhall praiſe the Redeemer.

The church will live and proſper, and will come forth from the furnace of affliction as gold purified ſeven times. "And the redeemed of the Lord ſhall return and come to Zion with ſongs, and everlaſting joy upon their heads. They ſhall obtain joy and gladneſs, and ſorrow and ſighing ſhall flee away." And why may not Chriſtians begin their ſong now? Though you do not ſee the glorious Redeemer, yet, believing, you love him who orders all things perfectly well, takes the beſt care of the church, and of every one who truſts in him, and will glorify himſelf by all things to the higheſt degree. Well may you rejoice with joy unſpeakable and full of glory; while you watch and keep your garments, ſtriving together for the faith of the goſpel, and in nothing terrified by your adverſaries. With joy I now bid you a hearty, though I hope not a long, FAREWELL.

But New-England, the place of my nativity, demands my more particular attention. Aſide from my partiality in favour of this part of the world, I believe that all men of obſervation and judgment in this matter, who are acquainted with the Proteſtant world in general, and with the religious ſtate of New-England, from the firſt ſettlement of it, will grant there has been the appearance of more true religion in principle, profeſſion and practice, and a more regular, moral conduct among all orders and ages of perſons, in this part of America, than in any other part of the Chriſtian world of equal extent. Boſton, the metropolis of New-England, has been, till within leſs than fifty years paſt, a place of more religious order in the obſervation of the ſabbath and other religious duties, a better education of children, and of a more decent, ſober, moral conduct of the inhabitants in general, than of any other equally or more populous city or town on the face of the earth. And the people in general in New-England were diſpoſed to pay reſpect to religion, to maintain family religion

ligion and worſhip. The ſabbath and public worſhip were regarded and attended upon, by the inhabitants in general. The churches were conſiderably large, and a degree of diſcipline kept up. Children were under government, inſtructed and catechiſed. Groſs, open vices were in a great degree reſtrained. Leading men in public ſtations were in general exemplary, and the bigger part of people were intelligent in things of morality and religion, and of a good behaviour.

But, alas! "How is the gold become dim! How is the moſt fine gold changed!" Of late years a great and rapid degeneracy has taken place, both in the doctrines and duties of religion. Family worſhip, and a proper government and religious education of children, are generally neglected. Error and ignorance in religious concerns, and vice and immorality in conduct, are greatly increaſing. Infidelity, Deiſm and Atheiſm are ſpreading as an irreſiſtible torrent, and many, if not moſt, of the youth and riſing generation are growing up ready to imbibe error and infidelity. If theſe ſhall have their natural courſe, unleſs divine influence interpoſe, and put a ſtop to them, New-England will ſoon become as famous for irreligion, infidelity, atheiſm, immorality and heatheniſm, as it has been for the contrary; and Chriſtianity will be wholly excluded and forgotten. It is true that all Chriſtian miniſters, and others in public and private ſtations, who are friends to the cauſe of Chriſt, ought to hope, pray and ſtrive againſt this evil, and exert themſelves to the utmoſt in all proper ways in oppoſition to the cauſe of ſin, Satan and evil men; and be ready to die in the cauſe of truth and religion. In the pleaſing hope of this, I embrace you all, whether perſonally acquainted with you or not, with the moſt cordial affection, and benevolent FAREWELL. At the ſame time I take my leave of New-England, with the painful fear and proſpect of the evils which have been mentioned, flying to my text and the truths contained in it for ſupport and comfort.

Rhode-Iſland,

Rhode-Iſland, particularly Newport the capital, in which I have lived near thirty of the laſt years of my life, now demands my ſpecial attention.

This town has been long noted for the many different religious ſects and denominations into which the inhabitants are divided, while the body of the people have been conſidered, I believe juſtly, to have very little true religion, if any; and they have appeared more diſſolute, vicious, erroneous and ignorant, than people in general are in other parts of New-England. And there has been no general revival of religion, or reformation, to this day; and the moral ſtate and character of the inhabitants in general has not become better, but the contrary. The extraordinary and general revival of religion in New-England and many other places, about ſixty years ago, did not reach Newport in any conſiderable degree. While the heavenly dew fell copiouſly on other places, this town received but a few ſcattering drops, and remained almoſt wholly dry. There are a great number of families in this place who have no appearance of any ſort of religion in their houſes, and who never attend on any public worſhip; and there are many individuals of this character in other families; and many others, who, though they attend public worſhip ſometimes, yet not conſtantly nor often. All theſe doubtleſs include the greateſt number of the whole inhabitants; and a great part of them are ſo inattentive to religion, and ſo ignorant, that they have really no religious principles: others have imbibed, and are ſtrongly fixed in, religious maxims and notions, as contrary to the Bible as darkneſs is to the light. Of thoſe who conſtantly attend public worſhip, including the profeſſors of religion, very few of them maintain any family worſhip or religion, and by far the greater part are ſo immoral in their conduct, or ignorant or erroneous in their notions of religion, as to fall vaſtly ſhort of the ſcripture character of true Chriſtians.

There

There have been a number of real and excellent Chriſtians in this town, of different denominations, who are now in heaven; and doubtleſs there are ſome yet among us, but there is reaſon to conclude that the number of ſuch is greatly leſſened, and that there are now but very few. Of you I take my affectionate leave, wiſhing you may increaſe in number, and ſhine, in the midſt of a crooked and perverſe generation, as lights in the world.

The ſlave trade, and the ſlavery of the Africans, in which this town has had a greater hand than any other town in New-England, muſt not be paſſed over unmentioned here. This inhuman trade has been the firſt and chief ſpring of all the trade and buſineſs by which this town has riſen and flouriſhed: which has therefore been built up, in a great meaſure, by the blood and unrighteous ſufferings of the poor Africans. And this trade is yet carried on here, in the face of all the light and matter of conviction of the unrighteouſneſs and aggravated iniquity of it, which has of late years been offered, and againſt the expreſs laws of God and man. And there is no evidence that the citizens in general have a proper ſenſe of the evil of this buſineſs, of the guilt which has been contracted by it, and of the diſpleaſure of God for it, or that they have a juſt abhorrence of it; but there is much evidence of the contrary, and that there is little or no true repentance of it.

In this dark, unpleaſant and melancholy view of the ſtate and character of the body of the inhabitants of this town, I muſt take my leave, with a painful proſpect of the evil which is coming upon them and their poſterity; which they would not believe, were they told. To moſt of them I cannot ſpeak, and if I could, and they ſhould know what I think and ſay of them, it would only ſerve to excite the reſentment and indignation of the moſt.

But there is a bright ſide, to which the Chriſtian may look for ſupport and comfort, in the midſt of all this

this dark and evil ſtate of things, which cannot be too often brought into view. All this ſin and wrath of man, and the evils which attend and follow it, will praiſe Chriſt, and turn to the greateſt good of his kingdom. And all the wicked ſhall be ſhaken from the earth, and from this iſland too; and it ſhall yet be full of meek, humble and holy inhabitants, who ſhall praiſe the Lord, and delight themſelves in the abundance of peace and happineſs. AMEN. HALLELUJAH: for the Lord God Omnipotent reigneth.

But I muſt now come nearer home, and, not without ſenſible and affectionate emotions, take my farewell of the church and congregation in this town, with whom I have lived, miniſtering to them moſt of the time for above thirty years.

When I firſt came among you the church was not ſmall, and increaſed in number; and the congregation appeared to flouriſh. Above an hundred young perſons uſed to repair to my houſe at appointed times for religious inſtruction. But when the war with the Britiſh came on, we were, for a time, broken up, and many of us ſcattered into the country, a number of whom never returned again. In this time our parſonage houſe was deſtroyed, the bell of the meeting-houſe was taken away, and the inſide of the houſe was ſo defaced and deſtroyed by the enemy, that public worſhip could not be attended in it; and thoſe who ſtayed in the town during the reſidence of the Britiſh here, and thoſe who went out and returned again, ſuffered loſſes in their worldly intereſt. By theſe events, and by the deaths that have taken place, both on the land, and of the men who have uſed the ſea, we are become few in number, and in a degree poor in worldly circumſtances. Moſt of the church and congregation which were on the ſtage when I firſt came here are gone to the grave. But the greateſt calamity of all is, the good people who have deceaſed have none, or very few, to ſucceed them and fill up their places, and have left us in a great and awful degree deſtitute of the power and practice of true reli-

gion. In theſe dark and diſagreeable circumſtances, I now take my leave of you; yet with a hope, though a faint one, that after I am gone God will build you up, and grant you and your children greater ſpiritual bleſſings than you have had while I have been with you.

I have not ſhunned to declare unto you all the counſel of God, ſo far as I have underſtood what it was. In doing this I am ſenſible I have preached and publiſhed doctrines which are very offenſive and odious to many, though I hope to but few if any of you. I have oppoſed evil practices, by which I have incurred the diſpleaſure and reſentment of many; and have taught and inculcated duties, and an experimental, practical religion, which conſiſts moſt eſſentially in ſelf-denial, as the only way to heaven, which are diſagreeable to many, and not believed to be true. Some of the doctrines which I have preached and publiſhed have been oppoſed from the preſs and the pulpit, and more privately, and have not been underſtood, and repreſented as horrible and miſchievous, tending to deſtroy all true religion, &c. But all this has no impreſſion on me, to excite the leaſt doubt of the truth of the doctrines ſo oppoſed, or to incline me to ceaſe to aſſert and vindicate them. I have ſuch clear and full conviction, and unſhaken confidence, that the doctrines which I have for a long courſe of years preached and maintained, are the truths contained in the Bible, that I ſtand as a brazen wall, unhurt, and not moved by all the ſhafts of oppoſition and reproach which have been levelled at me, and the ſyſtem of truth and religion which I have eſpouſed; being aſſured that it will ſtand forever; and certain beyond a doubt, from ſcripture, reaſon and experience, that a cordial belief and love of theſe truths, with religious exerciſes and conduct agreeable to them, is connected with ſalvation, and is a ſufficient ground of ſupport and comfort under the greateſt trials, and in the neareſt view of death and eternity. On this foundation I cheerfully reſt my eternal intereſt, which indeed is infinite, and invite all to do the ſame.

To

To you therefore, my dear people, both old and young, as a dying man, and in the view of a judgment and eternity to come, I recommend the religion which I have endeavoured to preach and inculcate among you for a number of years, and to exemplify in practice, both publicly, more privately and in secret. Being assured that he only is safe and happy who is a real Christian, I recommend Christ to you with my dying breath as the only refuge for sinners: for "He that believeth, and is baptized, shall be saved; but he that believeth not, shall be damned."

Finally, I take my leave of all my acquaintance, friends, and relatives, whether nearer or farther off, wishing they may all partake of the saving blessings of the gospel: and if I have any enemies, I forgive them, and wish to them the same blessings. To my kind benefactors, I wish the abundant rewards promised in the word of God to the charitable and bountiful, even to all who give so much as a cup of cold water to any of the professed disciples of Christ, because they belong to Him. To my particular *Christian Friends*, in whom has been my chief delight, and who, I have often said, are my greatest treasure on earth, I leave my best wishes, with a fond and animating hope of living forever with you in the most intimate, perfect and uninterrupted friendship. AMEN.

*FINIS.*

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